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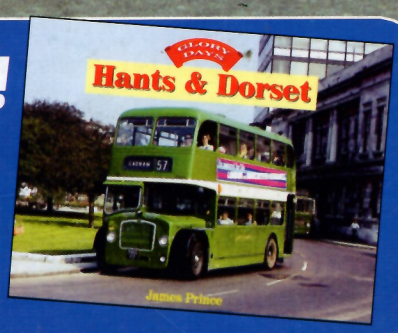

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Ian Allan

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BUSES

VOLUME 57 NO 617 AUGUST 2006

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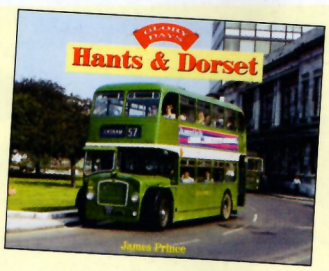

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WHERE NEXT FOR STAGECOACH?

Once in a while, just when we think we understand the broad direction in which the UK bus industry is going, someone surprises us. As often as not, that someone is Stagecoach's Brian Souter.

While the major groups appeared to have settled into a pattern of strategic acquisitions, some organic growth and occasional disposals of underperforming businesses, news of the impending sale of Stagecoach's London businesses came like a bolt from the blue. Why sell around a sixth of the business, especially a seemingly successful sixth that may be a model for how bus operation will be organised in other major conurbations?

It's a move that has sent the industry's conspiracy theorists into overdrive. Is Stagecoach selling off the family silver so Brian Souter might buy back what's left and run it again as a private business? Is he amassing a war chest for a big acquisition he is keeping up his sleeve?

Financial commentators trot out the 'going private' notion every few months just as royal watchers like to speculate that Prince Charles will renounce the throne in favour of his elder son; it's no more likely to happen, so forget it. The big acquisition theory might be more plausible, but if it is up his sleeve, it will remain there. PLC chief executives don't let slip their plans before they are ready to advise the City. Their shareholders would have their guts for garters if they did and Stagecoach's chief chooses his every word with care.

So, we're left with the publicly uttered explanation, which might sound unexciting, but makes perfect sense. Macquarie Bank, an investment group with a diverse portfolio of global transport and other businesses, tried to buy Stagecoach's New Zealand business, then returned with an offer Perth could not refuse for its red London buses. £263.6million in cash made this business worth more to someone else than it was to its British owner. And it made rival groups appreciate how much their London businesses might also be worth.

£60million goes straight into the employees' pension fund and the rest, for now, pays back a chunk of the corporate overdraft while alert eyes are kept open in case attractive bolt-on acquisition opportunities present themselves in the UK and North America.

The question is how big are the bolts that it is prepared to hammer into its sides? Probably quite modest until things become clearer on the railways. Analysts sound confident that Stagecoach is still narrow favourite to retain South West Trains. But it faces potentially potent competition from First, National Express and Arriva and, should it lose the franchise, it would be a diminished and weakened business.

That's where a few of Brian Souter's carefully chosen recent words might offer a clue to his exit route with Macquarie's remaining £200million. At an industry conference in the spring, he revealed that his 'dream merger' would be with Go-Ahead, but there is a huge obstacle to that happening. The competition police would block the road. Take away the London buses and maybe the odds would reduce. Take away South West Trains and perhaps another obstacle goes. As things stand now, he still doesn't believe inter-group mergers will happen.

But if the past 20 years have taught us nothing else, it's that the most predictable part of the future is that we'll be astounded by the unexpected. That much we can forecast.

ALAN MILLAR

Cover picture: Stagecoach London TransBus Trident/ALX400 17917 (LX03 OSN). MARK LYONS

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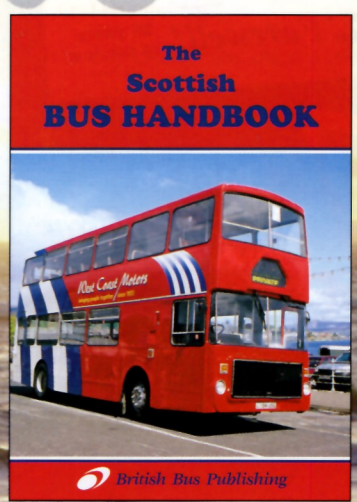

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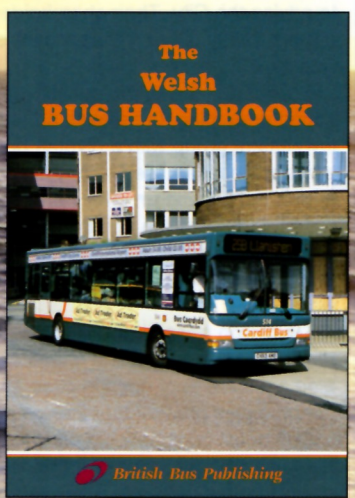

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Stagecoach quits capital in £263million sale to Oz bank

Stagecoach surprised the bus industry and delighted City investors on 23 June by announcing the sale of its 1,300-vehicle London bus business to Australian-owned Macquarie Bank for £263.6million in cash — a profit of around £120million. It intends to concentrate on developing and seeking acquisition opportunities for its deregulated British bus operations, which employ around 6,700 vehicles.

News of the deal, which is conditional on Transport for London approval and should be completed by the end of September, prompted a sharp rise in all the big bus groups' shares and triggered speculation that others might also realise similarly large sums for their London bus businesses. Stagecoach will invest about £60million of the proceeds in additional contributions to its pension schemes, that for its London employees transferring to the new owner. Initially, it will use the rest to reduce borrowings.

It bought the East London and Selkent companies, which then operated 980 buses, in September 1994 as part of the privatisation of London Buses. It subsequently considered selling the underperforming Selkent business but turned it round and estimates that the companies made a £23.6million operating profit in 2005/06.

The Stagecoach London management team, led by new managing director Nigel Barrett, will transfer to Macquarie, whose existing UK transport interests include Isle of Wight ferry operator Wightlink, Isle of Man Steam Packet, 50% of Bristol Airport (previously held by First) and a shareholding in Birmingham Airport. Stagecoach will continue to provide certain administrative and other services to the bus company for at least 12 months and will permit it to use the Stagecoach name under licence for a limited period.

'The Stagecoach London bus operation is an excellent opportunity to acquire a business that provides an essential community service in a regulated market,' says Macquarie Bank chief financial officer Greg Ward. 'It has a solid reputation, with capable management and high levels of customer service.'

Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter says the sale was neither pre-planned nor does it herald a spate of future sell-offs. He says Macquarie was a 'late player who broke the door down' in its efforts to buy the group's New Zealand business, though Stagecoach preferred to sell it to Infratil, as a New Zealand company, and the price differential offered by Macquarie was insufficient to persuade it to change its mind.

Macquarie remained keen to get into the bus business. The contractual nature of the London business appealed to Macquarie but he says it 'does not appeal to Stagecoach'. 'These guys want certainty; they don't like uncertainty,' he said at a briefing to announce Stagecoach's 2005/06 results. 'We kind of like uncertainty. We are an entrepreneurial company and we like to market our own networks.' He insists that Stagecoach is 'not speaking to anyone about anything else'.

Macquarie's bid for the London business put a value on the business, which he says had already peaked. 'There was no auction for London. Macquarie came and asked.'

Financial director Martin Griffiths says the sale gives Stagecoach 'additional flexibility, but doesn't alter our acquisition strategy', which Brian Souter says remains one of continuing to acquire 'small bolt-on businesses' and pursuing selective rail franchise opportunities. He denies that it is seeking consolidation with one of the other big groups. There would be too many difficulties from the competition authorities, he says. 'We are not in an asset sale mode, but selling the London business does give us more flexibility in the provincial market.'

Asked whether he thought other groups might be tempted to sell their London operations, he said: 'I can't imagine Macquarie is the only player with an eye to this sort of asset. In fact, I can say categorically that it is not.'

Below: Stagecoach's London fleets have provided other group companies with a steady supply of mid-life vehicles. Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympian 16093 (R93 XNO) of 1997 had reached the Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet by August 2004. JOHN YOUNG

UK acquisitions 'good for shareholders'

Stagecoach made an operating profit of £142.1million in the year to 30 April on £1.569billion turnover. Excluding the recently acquired Glenvale and Traction Group businesses, UK Bus revenue increased by 7.7% and returned an 11.4% operating margin (2005: 12.2%).

FirstGroup's UK Bus operating profit margin also fell in the year to 31 March, from 12% to 10.5%.

Stagecoach says bus passenger growth outside London was 2.1%, mainly in southern England, but decline continued in north-west England outside the PTE areas, in north-east England and Fife. The Glenvale (now Stagecoach Merseyside) operations continued to lose money, though former Traction Group companies Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Strathtay made a small profit. Together, these businesses lost £1.9million, but Brian Souter says the acquisitions were 'good for shareholders' and restructuring should improve their results.

His emphasis on provincial bus operations is founded on being able to turn round unpromising businesses. He says revenue on Merseyside is 'shooting up' and ridership is 'storming away'. The group is discussing a potential bus rapid transit scheme with Merseytravel and there are 'dynamic proposals' from Nexus in Tyne & Wear for guided busways. Kick-start in north-west Newcastle has produced 'stonkingly good growth' and he sees 'good prospects for organic growth' in Sheffield.

Government hints at change in bus regulation policy

The UK government and the Scottish Executive have both given the strongest hints yet that they will make radical changes in the regulation of bus services.

In evidence to the all-party backbench Commons transport committee, which is conducting its own enquiry into bus services, new transport minister Gillian Merron revealed that the government intends to take decisions in the autumn and may introduce new legislation next year. In doing so, she has also given the backbench MPs an opportunity to help shape any new legislation if they complete their report soon.

The policy review is being driven by continuing decline in bus use in many areas outside London, especially large English cities. 'Over the coming months . . . we intend to take a long hard look at the issues, so we can come to a decision about what needs to be done to reverse the trend,' she told the committee. 'No decisions have yet been made and it would be premature to do so without evidence. Our job is to find the right framework. Local circumstances will always dictate what works best.'

She says discussions have already begun with the bus industry, local government and stakeholder groups and ministers, and Department for Transport officials intend to make fact-finding visits to 'successful and not-so-successful bus projects'. She and new transport secretary Douglas Alexander have asked their officials to 'carry out more analysis of the legislative, funding and practical issues' involved.

A further clue to government thinking came the day before, when Scotland's first minister, Jack McConnell, hinted that time is running out for voluntary partnerships between bus operators and local transport authorities to prove their worth and that the Scottish parliament may legislate to improve bus services after next year's elections.

'In the first term of the parliament we had legislation that established quality bus contracts as an alternative to what would then have been described as re-regulation of buses in Scotland,' he said. 'It's possible that concept could still work, but I think we need to be alive to the possibility that it might not be the end of the story. I personally would not be in favour of going backwards to the sort of regulation system that we once had.'

The Passenger Transport Executives Group seized on Gillian Merron's announcement to renew its call for re-regulation. 'We believe that one of the best things the government could do for social inclusion and regeneration in the city regions is to make it easier for those city regions to plan and regulate their bus networks,' says PTEG chairman Roy Wicks.

Cambridge busway and Bristol bus showcase secure funding

The Department for Transport has provided the funding for the Cambridge-St Ives guided busway and a major upgrade of Bristol-area bus services to go ahead. Bus projects in Yorkshire and Warwickshire also figure in funds allocated for English local transport plans.

The DfT is providing £92.5million towards the £116.2million Cambridgeshire scheme, which at over 25km will be the world's longest guided busway. The open access scheme will be built largely over disused railway trackbed, with Huntingdon & District, Whippet Coaches, Stagecoach and Burton's Coaches likely to provide services. Private developers, notably those building the new town of Northstowe, will meet the balance of the cost.

Cambridgeshire has selected construction company Edmund Nuttall, which built the Fastway guided busway in Crawley, as preferred bidder for the project and expected to give its own final approval on 18 July.

The £68million greater Bristol bus showcase covers 35 to 40 routes on 10 corridors in the city, North East Somerset, North Somerset & South Gloucester and Bath, providing new low-floor buses, bus lanes, enhanced traffic signals and improved passenger information. Work begins next April, starting with route X1 (Bristol-Weston-super-Mare) and the Bristol-Cribbs Causeway and Bath-Southdown corridors. The DfT is providing £42million, private developers £6million and First Bristol and Somerset & Avon £20million for what managing director Tony Anthistle says will be 'high quality' buses.

The DfT is also fully funding a £20.7million revived bus priority corridor along 3.5km of Kirkstall Road, Leeds with 24hr bus lanes and road widening, and a £13.5million Greater Manchester urban traffic control system to deliver 'better and more efficient bus services'. It is meeting £4million of the £8.6million cost of South Yorkshire PTE's Yorcard smartcard trial on three Sheffield bus corridors and the Doncaster-Sheffield railway (the first use of smartcards to buy pay-as-you-go deregulated bus journeys) and £12.9million of the £14.8million Spark upgrade of Leamington Spa-Warwick bus services with 20 new buses and two new bus stations.

It has conditionally approved plans to extend the Manchester Metrolink tramway to Oldham, Rochdale and Chorlton, with Greater Manchester PTE funding an extension to Droylesden, and is funding track and electric substation replacement on the Blackpool-Fleetwood tramway.

Among schemes still awaiting DfT approval are bus rapid transit projects for Brighton & Hove and Leeds, rapid transit for East Lancashire, Coventry, Bath and Bristol, and bus corridor enhancements in Tyne & Wear and Co. Durham.

Left: The greater Bristol showcase project includes the X1 service between Weston-super-mare and Bristol, for which First Somerset & Avon 32638 (WX05 UAH), a Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TL, carries branding. DANIEL STAZICKER

ChesterBus sell-off rumour as Blackpool Transport expands

Chester City Council is reported to be considering the sale of its loss-making ChesterBus company, but Blackpool Transport has expanded its open-top sightseeing interests into Manchester.

The *Liverpool Daily Post*, which first broke the news that the owners of Glenvale Transport intended to sell their company, says that Liberal Democrat-controlled Chester Council's cabinet will pursue a sale option recommended by consultants, but is keeping details secret for commercial reasons.

The 78-vehicle operator, which has an obsolescent former tram depot in a prime city centre location, lost £71,000 in 2004/05 and is one of only 16 remaining local authority-owned bus companies. Were it to be sold, it would of interest to FirstGroup and Arriva, which already operate into the city. The report comes little over six months after LibDem-controlled Bournemouth Council sold a 90% shareholding in its Yellow Buses company to French transport group Transdev, whereas Blackburn with Darwen Council appears to have deferred any decision to sell a stake in Blackburn Transport.

According to the newspaper, councillors and officers are saying little. It quotes council leader Paul Roberts saying: 'If there were to be a sale imminent, I couldn't say anything anyway because of all sorts of commercial confidentiality issues.'

By contrast, council-owned Blackpool Transport Services has expanded its open-top operations with the purchase of City Sightseeing's 50% share of the Blackpool Tour and all of the sightseeing company's directly operated Manchester Tour. City Sightseeing is devoting more resources to overseas expansion, but both tours retain City Sightseeing branding.

The Blackpool operation has been extended to the airport and runs along the seafront from Starr Gate, with a separate route covering the extension to the zoo. The Manchester Tour is being extended into the autumn, with more weekend operation. As part of the deal, Blackpool Transport — which already licensed and serviced the Blackpool Tour buses — will buy additional vehicles from Ensignbus and is servicing the three Manchester-based Metrobuses in Blackpool.

Left: ChesterBus 343 (P343 OEW), a Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart SLF new to Halton. CLIFF BEETON

Blue Bus is back in business

Less than nine months after selling his Bolton-based Blue Bus business to Arriva, Roger Jarvis has returned to bus operation in Lancashire by purchasing Whittaker's Coach Travel of Penwortham and reviving the Blue Bus name. The company operates school contracts and four Lancashire County Council supported services.

Former owner Richard Whittaker is concentrating on engineering work, much of it for the Selnec Preservation Society as well as continuing to maintain the new Blue Bus operation's 10 Mercedes-Benz midibuses and one Volvo Citybus double-decker. Seven of the midibuses provide the four local bus routes.

These operate from Preston and Chorley on the Blue Bus licence, which Roger Jarvis retained after selling his previous business to Arriva on 31 July last year. Roger Jarvis has also acquired six new and one nearly new bus to launch a short-term bus rental venture, hiring them to operators while accident-damaged buses are repaired. There are three new Optare Solos, three new MCV Evolution-bodied Dennis Darts and an East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekka, which is less than a year old.

Right: R8091 YJC, one of two ex-Arriva Cymru Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios that Blue Bus has acquired for the former Whittaker's fleet. DAVID CLARK

Derby bus station finally bites the dust

Bulldozers finally moved into Derby bus station in June, knocking down the art deco drive-through structure to make way for the £95million Riverlights complex that promises to include a new bus station with saw-tooth bays.

Despite protests and a campaign to retain at least the roadside buildings, the 1933-built facility closed last October when services were transferred to temporary stops in nearby streets.

Protestors, who camped on part of the roof in an ultimately futile attempt to stop the demolition, used the caravan in the picture. Contractors expected to clear the site by the end of July, with construction of the new facilities beginning by November.

Picture by MATTHEW BARKER

Swan's of Chadderton, Greater Manchester introduced the first two production Caetano Levante-bodied Volvo B12B wheelchair-accessible coaches on National Express service 060 (Leeds-Manchester-Liverpool) on 26 June. Here, FN06 FLC leaves Manchester on its first day in service. DAVID BARROW

Big Bus marks 15th birthday with KMB repowers

The 15-year-old Big Bus Company has introduced the first of 12 repowered Leyland Olympians to its 72-strong open-top sightseeing fleet in London. It is also maintaining last year's ticket prices.

When the company, owned by the Maybury family, began operating in 1991, it was one of six competing in the sightseeing market. Today, its only competitor is Arriva's Original Tour, which has an association with City Sightseeing. Big Bus Company also has directly operated overseas ventures in Dubai and Philadelphia, USA and is exploring other possibilities in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

The Alexander-bodied tri-axle Olympians — new to Kowloon Motor Bus in Hong Kong — continue a policy of replacing smaller capacity double-deckers with fewer high-capacity vehicles. They join 30 other ex-Hong Kong tri-axle buses — 19 Dennis Condors and 11 MCW Metrobuses — operating alongside 30 Leyland Titans. Cummins — whose earlier C-series engine impressed the Mayburys in Dennis Javelin coaches — has re-powered all 72 buses with Euro3 ISCe units, and six more tri-axles may be added next year to replace Titans.

Bigger vehicles bring some environmental and economic benefits. While fewer, cleaner-engined buses help the environment, engineering director Des Maybury says fuel consumption is much higher. 'They are averaging 4 or 5mpg, whereas a Gardner engine did 7 or 8mpg.' All retain their original gearboxes, an arrangement that causes fewer complications in the Voith-geared Condors and Metrobuses than the Leyland Hydracyclic-geared Titans. The first eight Olympians also have Voith gearboxes, but the others — which (like three of the Condors) are being converted to half open-top— have ZF transmission.

Despite keeping its 24hr adult ticket price at £20 this year, Big Bus is still £2 more expensive than Arriva, but commercial manager Mark Osborne says it offers more for customers' money. Both operators' tickets offer 24hr travel on hop-on, hop-off tours with a one-way river cruise between the Tower and Westminster; but Big Bus also includes up to five walking tours (a *Da Vinci Code* walk is particularly popular this year) and a Bonus Card offering discounts on other purchases.

The company employs up to 350 staff, peaking in July and August when it carries 25% of its year's passengers, and employs live English language guides rather than tapes. It wants to expand its range of recorded foreign language commentaries, with Chinese a high priority.

Left: D514 UGT, one of the Big Bus Company's eight fully open-top Alexander-bodied tri-axle Olympians, in Trafalgar Square in June. The other four are half open-top. GRAHAM INNES

More orders for Enviro400

Alexander Dennis has taken orders for 58 more Enviro400 double-deckers and says a further 40 are in the pipeline.

Stagecoach and First expect nineteen 10.8m examples in December. First's nine, to replace cascaded London Tridents on a park-&-ride contract in Plymouth, will be to a high specification with 71 leather-trimmed seats (each with four-channel radio), an information system with two large flat screen monitors on each deck, plus air chill extraction and cab air conditioning; the extra features limit their standing capacity to four. Stagecoach's 10 will be 75-seaters with standing room for 11 more.

The other 39 are 10.1m 67-seaters for National Express-owned Travel London (27) and Metroline (12), with capacity for 23 standees.

Right: Stagecoach Manchester's first of 22 Enviro400s include 19004 (MX06 XAC). ALEX HORNBY

SE is smallest, cheapest Solo yet

Optare has developed a shorter version of the Solo midibus with cheaper components and materials to bridge the gap between the existing 7.8m Solo and its 16-seat Alero Plus minibus. The Solo SE — based on the narrow SlimLine model — is 7.1m long with up to 23 seats; with two fewer seats, it could be driven on a car licence. The cheaper SE package is also being offered in the 7.8m Solo.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Redwing Coaches of London and sister companies Reliance of Gravesend and TWH Travel have been sold to Addison Lee, which operates a large people carrier private hire fleet in the London area, serving the major airports.

Transdev is rebranding its five Blazefield fleets in Yorkshire and Lancashire with corporate style fleetnames (e.g. Transdev Yorkshire Coastliner).

Finglands has withdrawn from route 192 (Manchester-Hazel Grove) on which Stagecoach and UK North's GM Buses are in fierce competition. EYMS-owned Finglands remains on the parallel Wilmslow Road corridor.

South Yorkshire PTE launched its YourNextBus mobile phone real-time information service on 11 July on 11 routes in Sheffield and Doncaster. It will be extended across the network in the coming months.

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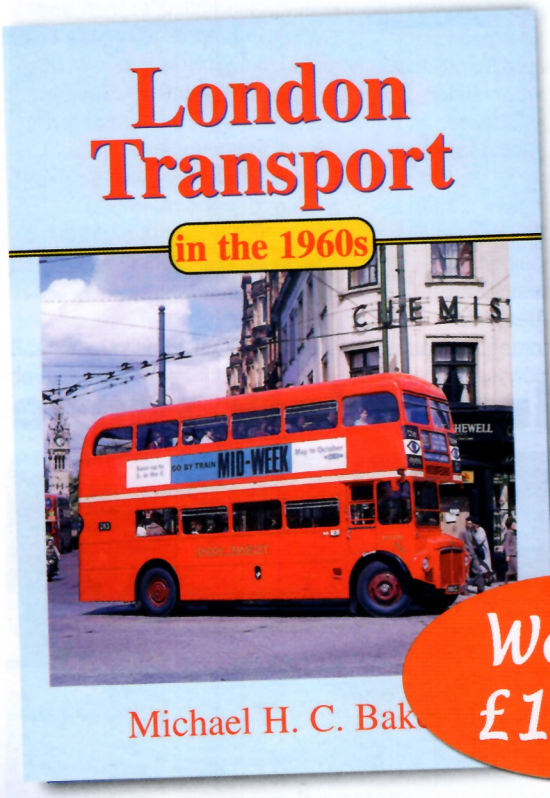

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Scania aims for 70% increase in world bus sales

Scania has set itself an ambitious long-term annual target of selling over 10,000 buses and coaches worldwide. Last year, the Swedish-based manufacturer sold a record 5,816 vehicles — nearly 10% of them in the UK — but as it launches its new generation of Euro4 and Euro5-engined vehicles, it has served notice on its competitors that their markets are in its sights, and it wants to supply many of these with its own bodywork.

It won't say when the 10,000 target will be achieved, but Hans Hansson, its senior vice president for buses and coaches, says it will be 'not tomorrow but in the long run'. He admits that the company's order bookings so far this year are down on 2005, but says he is confident for the future. 'We will further strengthen Scania's position as one of the leading manufacturers of complete buses, while ensuring that our bus business enjoys continued profitable growth.'

By complete buses, he means vehicles in which 'the bodywork should have as much Scania identity as the chassis'. While Scania is keen to increase the proportion of buses sold with its own Polish and Estonian-made Omni bodywork and coaches with close partner Irizar's bodies, he says: 'It is irrelevant who builds the bodywork or where. Companies that bodybuild for Scania in its defined markets must meet uncompromising quality standards.'

He believes that bus operators across Europe increasingly want to buy a complete bus from a single supplier. 'Customers want a partner that can offer an overall solution, so we will deepen our collaboration with selected bodybuilding companies that deliver high-quality products, with the Scania organisation assuming responsibility for supplying parts, service and maintenance.'

Hans Hansson says it intends to consolidate and improve its already strong position in the UK (it was third biggest supplier after Volvo and Alexander Dennis last year), Spain and the Nordic countries. He believes that the gathering pace of deregulation and privatisation across Europe, with publicly-owned bus operations transferring to multinational bus and train operators, will help it increase sales in the hitherto highly nationalistic French and German markets. However, he expects most of the growth to come from central and eastern Europe and, in the longer term, China and India.

For the UK this year, Scania is aiming to sell around 600 vehicles (400 buses and 200 coaches), against 537 registered in 2005.

More Omni bodies in new single-deck range

Scania's own bodywork figures more prominently in its new lower emission Euro4-engined single-deck bus range for the UK.

Initially at least, Scania is only producing vertical versions of its five-cylinder DC9 bus engines, whereas its six-cylinder Euro3 predecessor is inclined in the transverse-engined N94 and in-line engined L94. The full low-floor N94 is replaced by the N230, N270 and N310 chassis (the numbers equate to engine horsepower), the L94 by the K230, K270 and K310, which have a higher back end than their predecessor. Reading — which operates Wright-bodied L94s — is taking 12 Polish-built OmniCity single-deckers the first five of which are fully air-conditioned CN270UB models due in August; the N-series is also offered with the new East Lancs Esteem body. Geoff Bell, Scania's UK bus and coach director, says: 'The cost of developing an inclined five-cylinder engine could not be justified at present, but we would like to have one.'

The most notable addition to the UK range is the low-entry OmniLink, with K-series chassis and Polish bodywork similar in style to the OmniCity. Nottingham City Transport expects three 13.7m 55-seat CK310UB tri-axle versions (Fleet News, June *Buses*) and a two-axle 44-seat 12m right-hand-drive demonstrator has already been sold to DRM of Bromyard, a Herefordshire operator with several Scanias in its fleet.

Geoff Bell hopes to add a Wright Solar-bodied K-series as a direct replacement for the L94UB, of which around 140 will be delivered this year mainly to Translink, Reading Transport and Thamesdown. Wrightbus — which recently announced a new partnership to body an MAN single-deck chassis (*Buses* May) — has built a mock-up body on a prototype K230 chassis, but a final design has yet to be signed off. 'We want to continue with that option,' he says.

Scania also hopes to add a UK version of the OmniLine, a particularly civilised 12m and 12.7m step-entrance dual-purpose single-decker with K-series chassis. This has a welded rather than bolted aluminium body and, in two-door layout, can incorporate a wheelchair lift in the centre door. Scania builds up to 80 a year in its small Estonian plant, but would increase production if it secured further orders.

One target customer is Translink, which is seeking wheelchair accessible replacements for Ulsterbus's large fleet of Leyland Tigers.

Above: The Estonian-built OmniLine will be offered to Translink to replace Ulsterbus's Tigers.

Left and inset: Scania's first UK specification OmniLink is destined for the DRM fleet in Herefordshire. The rear seats are higher than on the inclined engined L94.

Delayed double-decker gets into first gear

A Euro3-engined OmniCity double-deck demonstrator alongside preserved London Transport MD1, the first of 164 MCW-bodied Scania BR111DH Metropolitans built for the UK capital. It has the redesigned lower dash that is meant to identify Euro4-engined Scanias.

Scania's Polish-built OmniCity double-decker has finally gone into limited production, with the first of five for Lothian Buses being tilt tested in June. An ethanol-fuelled demonstrator is also destined for the UK.

Although it launched the model, based on the N94UD OmniDekka chassis, in January last year, so far only a pre-production demonstrator has gone into service with Travel West Midlands. The five 12m Lothian buses — for its shuttle service to Edinburgh Airport — were due for imminent delivery in July. The only other order yet announced for the OmniCity double-decker, from Transdev for its London fleet, has been increased from seven to 15 buses. The first batch, for route 148 (Camberwell-Shepherd's Bush), is due in August, the others following in October.

All 20 will have 230hp Euro3 DC9 engines, but production of this option ended in June; a Euro4-engined double-decker is undergoing tests in Sweden, with production scheduled to start next February. A demonstrator is also scheduled to be fitted with an ethanol-fuelled engine, Scania's favoured route for ultra low emissions.

Scania's UK bus and coach director, Geoff Bell, admits that the delays in starting Polish double-deck production have limited its growth. 'We have been hesitant at pushing it,' he says. 'We see a lot of our potential volume increase coming in double-deckers. We want to carry on selling them with East Lancs bodies, but we will be limited by East Lancs's capacity. It built around 160 OmniDekkas last year.'

When the ethanol-fuelled double-decker comes to Britain, it will use technology that Scania has been testing since 1979 and offering as a production option since 1989. It has supplied nearly 600 ethanol buses since then, most of them to the Swedish capital city of Stockholm where such buses provide all regular services into the city centre. Ethanol is produced from sugar cane, sugar beets, cereals or biowaste.

Accessible Irizar on the horizon as coach range gains new flagship

Irizar — Scania's principal global bodybuilding partner in the coach market — is considering developing a wheelchair accessible version of the PB body built on the K-series chassis.

Without such an option, it risks losing future orders from National Express, which has turned to Caetano and Plaxton for its latest coaches, as well as Translink and Bus Éireann on both sides of the Irish border. Irizar initially declined to offer a front wheelchair lift in the PB, which sells on a wide range of manufacturers' chassis in Spain and some other European markets, but NatEx's specification of its NX Magic Floor as standard on future deliveries of intercity coaches has cut it out of what had been a growing market for its coaches. With the two Irish operators also seeking wheelchair accessible express coaches, Irizar may have had a change of heart.

Although NatEx has ordered 44 Euro4-engined Scania K340EB coaches for this year, all will have the new Caetano Levante body being offered exclusively for NatEx services, and which also is built on the Volvo B12B. All will have the Magic Floor arrangement that lifts a wheelchair from pavement to the front nearside seating area.

The new K-series range is powered by new 12litre six-cylinder engines, the 340 and 380hp DC12, and the turbo-compound 420 and 470hp DT12. The flagship K470 is the most powerful Scania coach yet built. Although designed primarily for high altitude work in Spain, Scania anticipates selling it in small numbers to a few UK operators seeking a more powerful option.

Initial UK coach orders all are for DC12-engined coaches — two 12.9m Berkhof-bodied K340EBs for Tellings-Golden Miller, one tri-axle PB each for Elite Services and The Kings Ferry, and a Berkhof-bodied K380EB double-decker for Ausden Clark of Leicester.

The Irizar PB-bodied K470 is the new flagship coach from Scania.

Scania accompanied the launch of its new bus and coach range with a display of preserved buses that showed how advanced some of its 1950s and 1960s products were by contemporary British standards. This 1968 Scania-Vabis CR76 for Malmo, with D11 longitudinal engine, power-steering and two-speed automatic transmission, has the body structure that Metro-Cammell Weymann adopted a year later for the Metro-Scania produced in a joint venture with Scania.

Dominators bow out in Sheffield

First South Yorkshire marked the end of Dennis Dominator operation with a special running day on 25 June, when several examples provided service 82 (Bents Green-Stannington). First re-applied original South Yorkshire Transport fleetnumbers and past fleetname styles to some of them, including these two still powered by Rolls-Royce Eagle engines. Alexander-bodied 30398 (KKU 120W) — the 20th of the original batch — became 2120 again with Herries Road depot code. Still in Mainline yellow and red was 30443 (A316 XAK), numbered 2316 again and one of 10 bodied by Northern Counties to a unique design with that bodybuilder's front roof dome and top deck windscreen, but all other windows to Alexander design. *Pictures by MATT WHARMBY and TOM GRAHAM*

M&D competition winners

The six winners of our June competition to win the new *The Heyday of Maidstone & District* book from Ian Allan Publishing are Geoff Collins of Fareham, Keith Huxley of Oxfordshire, B. R. Ilbrey of Ivybridge, Stephen Turk of Gloucester, G. R. Wigley of Northampton and Stuart Windget of Weston-super-Mare. Congratulations to all six and to all of you who knew the correct answers were that M&D assumed that name in 1911, it absorbed Chatham & District in October 1955 and its head office was called Knightrider House. This month, we're offering you the chance of winning one of six copies of the new *Glory Days Hants & Dorset* book. See p26 for details.

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First Midlands MD returns north in management reshuffle

Ian Humphreys *(right)*, managing director of First's three Midlands businesses — Wyvern, Leicester and Northampton — is returning to Yorkshire as managing director of First Bradford. A *Buses* reader for 38 years, he began his career with West Yorkshire Road Car and was later with Eastern National and Thamesway.

He succeeds **Jonathan May**, who at 28 is regarded as one of the group's high fliers and moved on 1 July to lead one of the group's teams bidding for another rail franchise. Jonathan May also was First's MD in York, and the group credits him with overseeing the introduction of the 'ftr' bus rapid transit service, leading the development of the city's park-&-ride service and helping generate 37% additional business on the city's buses over the past four years. The two Yorkshire cities' managing directorships have been split, and the operations director with First Leeds, **Richard Eames** *(left)*, has been promoted to MD at York with effect from 8 August.

A further internal promotion at First sees **Michael Branigan** elevated within the Potteries company to engineering director.

Vectis GM leaves 'by mutual agreement'

Southern Vectis general manager **Alan White** has left his post after 13 years by what the parent Go-Ahead Group says is mutual agreement. Area director (Solent) **Phil Stockley** — managing director at Solent Blue Line when Go-Ahead bought Southern Vectis last year — now has day-to-day oversight of both companies. He was with Stagecoach before joining Vectis-owned Blue Line in 2004.

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Chris Moyes resigns following illness

Illness has forced **Chris Moyes** to step down as chief executive of the Go-Ahead Group. In the 18 months he has headed the group, it expanded its bus interests by acquiring Southern Vectis, Birmingham Coach Company and People's Express, and also won the South Eastern rail franchise. He is one of the management team who bought Go Ahead Northern from the National Bus Company and helped lead its subsequent expansion into southern England and the rail and airports businesses. He was appointed an OBE in the New Year honours list, is a past president of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, chairs the industry's GoSkills training organisation and is this year's president of the Omnibus Society. He also owns several preserved buses.

His successor is Go-Ahead rail chief executive **Keith Ludeman** (56). He has been with the group since 1996, when it acquired the London General bus company, where he became managing director when London Buses created separate subsidiaries in 1989. He led a management/employee buy-out in 1994. was previously MD at then council-owned Burnley & Pendle and, before that, was with Greater Manchester Transport.

Top posts axed at SPT

Two senior directors at Strathclyde Partnership for Transport are retiring early following a management restructure by the former PTE. Operations director **Douglas Ferguson** and director of corporate affairs **Iain Wylie** have left as new chief executive **Ron Culley** tries to change SPT's culture.

Barry Arnold made OBE, stripping driver an MBE

Stagecoach London managing director **Barry Arnold**, who retires in August after nine years in the post and a lifetime in the industry, was made an OBE in the Queen's Birthday honours list. Also honoured, as an MBE, was Travel Coventry bus driver **John George** *(right)*, for services to public transport and charity. He has been a driver for 36 years and was the founder member of a team of stripping bus drivers who called themselves The Full Wumpty and raised over £50,000 for charity.

Beyer is the Wright man for Optare

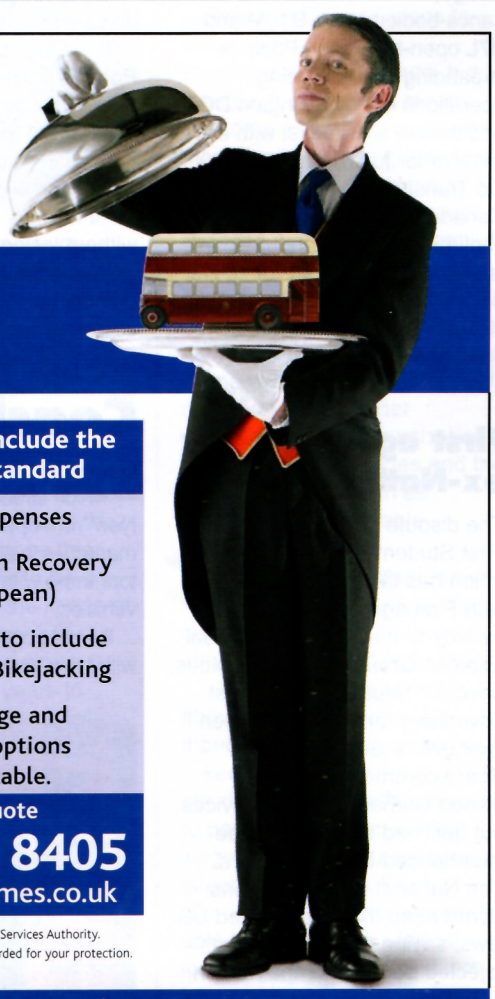
After 10 years on the Wrightbus sales team, **Paul Beyer** has joined Optare, handling sales in southern England and to some of the larger UK bus groups. He spent 23 earlier years in technical and engineering posts with London Transport and, latterly, MTL London. Wrightbus has recruited Dawsonrentals bus and coach regional sales manager **Steve Jackson** as national accounts manager, responsible initially for existing and new customers in Wales and the south of England.

Buses Worldwide honours Geoffrey Morant

Buses Worldwide, the society dedicated to the study of the international bus scene, has awarded **Geoffrey Morant** *(left)* life membership and the position of president emeritus in honour of his huge and continuing contribution to its affairs.

He was one of the society's six founder members in 1982, served as its first chairman and was editor of its magazine for two lengthy periods over its first 14 years. 'More than anyone, he built Buses Worldwide into what it is today,' says chairman Richard Stedall. Although now in poor health, Geoffrey Morant is still a regular contributor to the magazine's news columns and joins in on-line discussions on the society's newsgroup.

Buses Worldwide has also awarded life membership to **John Smith**, who served on the committee for 15 years, over 10 of them as chairman.



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Vegas bets on Wright StreetCar for MAX expansion plan

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada — already the United States' biggest operator of heavy-duty UK transit buses — is to expand its bus rapid transit system with the first overseas order for the Wright StreetCar.

An initial £30million order for 50 StreetCars — to be built by Wrightbus in Ballymena — is due in 2008/09, with options to buy two further 50-vehicle batches after that. The RTC's Citizens Area Transit already operates 50 British-built Alexander Dennis Enviro500 double-deckers in Las Vegas.

The StreetCars are for the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) BRT system, launched with 10 optically-guided Irisbus Civis diesel-electric hybrid buses built in France. They were delivered in 2003, soon after an RTC advisory panel tried to cancel the order in retaliation against French government refusal to back the American-led war in Iraq. Switching to the StreetCar removes that political obstacle, and provides the RTC with visually similar vehicles for the next two phases of MAX — lines serving downtown Las Vegas and nearby Boulder City.

There are significant differences between the American vehicles and the 40 StreetCars for FirstGroup in England. Passengers will buy tickets before boarding, rather than from on-bus vending machines, and they will board and alight through three, rather than two double-width doors.

While First's StreetCars have modified, but mechanically conventional Volvo B7LA chassis, the RTC vehicles will be hybrids with a Cummins ISL engine and a chassis supplied by Hess, the Swiss bodybuilder and bus trailer manufacturer. RTC's Civis fleet also is Cummins-powered. Wrightbus hopes to sell left-hand-drive Volvo-based StreetCars in France and Spain.

Above: An artist's impression of a StreetCar for the MAX system.

More Enviro500s for North America

Alexander Dennis is on the brink of securing two more North American orders for Enviro500 tri-axle double-deckers. Les Cars Rouge, which operates East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M and B7L open-toppers in Paris, is expanding its sightseeing operations into Washington DC and the US west coast with an initial order for 15 Enviro500s. Go Transit in the eastern Canadian city of Toronto has confirmed that Alexander Dennis is the preferred bidder for its first double-deckers, with negotiations close to conclusion for the purchase of 14 Enviro500s.

US pilots extra grant for bulk buying

The United States Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is piloting a programme that will allow groups of transit agencies to qualify for additional federal grant for new buses if they pool their orders to obtain volume discounts.

The FTA has appointed the Implicit Purchase Pooling Solutions company to manage the pilot, which envisages three agencies placing a joint order for at least 75 40ft buses.

Instead of the current 80% grant for vehicles complying with the strict Buy America local content rules, these would attract 90% funding without losing the individual agencies' ability to determine vehicle specifications, terms and conditions. An average new US transit bus costs between £160,000 and £650,000.

Above: AC Transit in Oakland, California overcame the Buy America restrictions by using local rather than federal funds for its new fleet of Belgian-built Van Hool low-floor buses. However, subsequent funding problems prevented it from taking all of them and part of the order for 40ft A330s has gone to Washington DC, to the central area Circulator service. PETE YORK

First agrees to pay ex-NatEx drivers

The dispute between UK-owned First Student and the Teamsters union has taken another twist with First agreeing to back pay awards to three former National Express Group yellow schoolbus drivers it refused to hire. First advertised for 30 drivers when it took over a Seattle School Board contract from NatEx-owned Durham School Services, but declined to hire the three experienced Durham drivers. The National Labor Relations Board ruled that this violated US laws, saying the drivers were rejected because of their union activities.

Coach USA plans for modern DUKWs

Stagecoach's Coach USA division — which already dominates the New York open-top sightseeing market — is planning an additional tour there with new amphibious vehicles.

It would operate in conjunction with New York Waterways, using a private pier to splash down into the harbour. Stagecoach chief executive Brian Souter feels new vehicles are more appropriate than reconditioned World War 2 military DUKWs, considering the number of people who had drowned or been shot in them in conflict.

Despite a £4million rise in fuel costs in the year to 30 April, Coach USA increased its operating profit margin from 7% to 7.2%, bringing in £17.7million on £247.6million turnover, which was up by £26.8million; 41% of its income came from scheduled services, 21% from charters, 19% from sightseeing tours and 19% from school bus and contract operations. The Coach Canada operation was enhanced by winning airport contracts.

Its recently launched 15-coach Megabus.com operation has yet to show a profit, having incurred start-up costs of £800,000 in 2005/06.

Left: Former Stagecoach London RML2481 is part of a small batch of Routemasters that Plaxton has converted to open top and reversed platform for Coach Canada. RUSSELL YOUNG courtesy STAGECOACH LONDON

Volvo launches 9litre-engined Polish-made city bus

Volvo has launched the Euro4 version of its Polish-built 7700 citybus. In UK language, the Euro3-powered 7700 combined a full low-floor B7L chassis with stainless steel bodywork built in Wroclaw, Poland.

The Euro4 version uses the 9litre engine — built by Volvo-owned Renault Trucks in France — that will also power the new B9TL double-decker, and turns the articulated B7LA into the B9LA.

While the 7700 is available in 12m rigid and 18m articulated versions, the low-entry B7RLE gains a Euro4 7litre unit produced in a joint venture with German-owned Deutz.

German residents oppose Veolia takeover

The French Veolia group's acquisition of a 51% shareholding in the municipal SVP undertaking in Pforzheim, Baden-Württemberg (Global News, June) may fall through owing to local residents' virulent opposition. The group has also lost a big part of its Dutch operation in the latest tendering round.

A pressure group in Pforzheim has collected 9,500 signatures, enough for a referendum on the issue to be held under German law in July. This is the first time that public transport privatisation in the country has triggered such strong grassroots opposition. SVP has 250 employees and 80 buses. Veolia — formerly Connex — has promised to honour existing wage agreements and has ruled out job losses before 2013. Pforzheim city officials say the takeover will save the local authority £1.23million a year and insists that the provision and quality of services will be maintained.

In the Netherlands, while Veolia's BBA-Connex undertaking has won a six-year contract to operate 200 buses in the Apeldoorn region, it loses most of its Brabant province services to state-owned Connexxion from 10 December. Connexxion, which this year celebrates the 125th anniversary of the start of NZH tram operations in the city of Haarlem and is itself likely to be privatised, also takes over some Friesland contracts from Arriva on the same day.

Above: BBA Connex has taken delivery of two 7.8m Optare Solos for part of its new Apeldoorn contract.

Above: One of 206 Polish-built MAN Lion's City buses that Connexxion has introduced since December. HARRY LAMING

Brussels sprouts up bronze buses

STIB/MVIB, the Brussels city undertaking, is to phase out its unusual livery of pale yellow with blue squares in favour of bronze and metallic grey.

Belgian designer Axel Enthoven, responsible for the Bova Futura and Jonckheere's new coach, says the colours reflect the Belgian capital's art nouveau architecture. The facelift coincides with a large influx of new buses and is also being applied to trams and the metro railway. 'We hope this project is going to have a big impact on the image of the city,' says mobility minister Pascal Smet. It took STIB 12 years to replace its previous livery and the current pace of repainting and fleet replacement means yellow buses should be around for at least three years.

Left: One of around 30 STIB buses in the new livery is this side-engined Van Hool A300 midi. PIERRE BERQUIN

Swiss PostAuto reinvents itself

A recent ruling by the federal Department of Justice & Police led SwissPost to convert 2,000-vehicle PostAuto — its bus operation — into a limited company, PostAuto Schweiz, on 1 July. The department found that PostAuto no longer has a legal responsibility to provide bus services, so does not constitute a core transport ministry responsibility. PostAuto is to be rated like any other private operator competing for contracts from the federal government and cantons.

SwissPost has no plans to sell any of its 100% shareholding in PostAuto, but the new arrangement means the company can co-operate more easily with other transport companies in Switzerland and neighbouring countries, adapt to changes in the market more quickly and react to local developments without creating a national precedent. Local authorities in cantons such as Berne want to cut costs through co-operation and other measures like joint purchasing, shared reserve vehicles and the division of tasks such as marketing and timetable planning.

PostAuto reached agreement with trades unions before the department's ruling, guaranteeing to maintain the 1,540 employees' existing above average pay levels, though these are no longer linked to civil service rates. 'Like our rivals, we need the flexibility to pay higher wages in high-wage areas,' says managing director Daniel Landolf. 'Conversely, we also need to be able to employ new staff on lower wages in regions where lower wages are paid.'

Undrwlmd by 'ftr', Yrk and lts of simlr abrvtns

First's StreetCars may look sexier than Europe's latest trams, but they don't yet deliver a tram-ride experience

Having read so much in this and other journals, I headed for York in June to check out FirstGroup's 'ftr' for myself along with two friends from Reading Buses and a Czech postgraduate transport-planning student.

On arrival by train, our usual search for information about onward travel by bus met with marginally more success than in Manchester as I described last month. The substantial Travel Centre is just about trains (so should really be renamed), but the tourist information office provided a small 'ftr' folder though we were told it had 'nothing about buses'. Proof positive, then, that 'ftr' is not a 'bus'? Also freely available there was a guide to the city and its attractions, which made no mention of buses, just park-&-ride. Apparently that's not a bus either.

Sadly, this innovative arrival was not publicised in the station. No 'footprints' on the concourse as with London's artics starting from Waterloo and Victoria, no special display boards, not even a First flag. Though it was not immediately clear, the 'ftr' (route 4) serves the outer stop in front of the station, and this could have done with a lot more shelter, even a covered pathway from the rail concourse. Taxis — as ever — are given higher priority than buses, occupying the whole of the covered station forecourt.

M-ticket 'not yet available'

At the stop, we encountered two of First's extra staff with manual Almex ticket machines, terminally damaging the impression that we were about to experience a truly 21st century transport system. They both scoffed at our credit-card size 'ftr' folders, claiming they were out of date — the contents were precisely the same as the larger leaflet found later — and took our £3 each for a FirstDay ticket. These were scruffily printed and showed an inky blur in place of the issuing company's name. Is that legal, I wonder? We were told that the on-board ticket machines would probably not be working (though they were), and my attempt to buy an M-ticket by mobile phone prompted a text message saying that these are not yet available (not good for a service by then running for 50 days).

We sat in the rear lounge area aboard the next number 4 to the University. It was reasonably comfortable for an urban service although the noise level appeared high, with several body squeaks (rather than rattles). As strangers to York, we followed our progress along the route by observing the on-board information screens and the line diagrams for the 4 placed helpfully above some (but not all) windows. Clearly prepared in corporate style, the small lilac lettering was hard to read. Why not double or even treble these diagrams in size and fill the bus with them?

When the screen announced 'Thief Lane' as the next stop, this didn't appear on the line diagram. Likewise Pulleyn Drive and The Marriott when travelling towards Acomb. The line diagram shows just one stop for each road the service travels — a bit like missing out Oxford Circus, Bond Street and Marble Arch on the Central Line diagram because all three are on Oxford Street. Nor do all the names shown on the stop flags or shelters line up with either the on-board information or the route map in the 'ftr' folder. It has taken years for British operators to make use of a simple piece of kit commonplace in Europe since the 1960s, so why do we then sell ourselves short?

Still worse is the way in which stop names are shown on the screens. I know 'ftr' is mobile phone text shorthand for 'future', but why is it necessary on a scrolling display to put 'Acomb Methdst Ch', 'Thanet Rd Spts Clb' and 'Grn La Rndbabt' and why are there no audible 'next stop' announcements?

The public won't be fooled

I'm afraid the idea that 'ftr' is more of a tram than a bus doesn't work. Despite the high ceiling and *avant garde* interior, the splendid Wrightbus StreetCar still sounds and rides like a bus. The problem for all those (including the UK government) who would have you believe that a bus — or bus rapid transit — does everything a tram does, is that such notions do not stack up. The public will not be fooled. Compare the tramway in Rouen with the city's TEOR busway and you'll see what I mean. It isn't about a sexy looking vehicle — and I would argue that some of Europe's newest trams are plain ugly — but the system that goes with it. Where is the 'track' of York's 'ftr'?

Not only isn't there any, but little has been done to give this route the look, feel or signature of a modern tramway. Few shelters have been replaced (*picture 1* is a particularly splendid example), too many stops still have no shelter at all and sometimes no timetable display in the shiny new case (*picture 2*). There are just a lot of Kassel kerbs, which do not work well with the wheel spats of the StreetCar and (*picture 3*) do not always extend sufficiently far to interface with the 'ftr' front doorway.

Then there's the on-board ticket machine. The last place it should be fitted is immediately inside the entrance door. Lessons from elsewhere have not been learned. If you want to remove the driver from the time consuming pain of fare collection, go for pavement ticket machines at stops. The only places where on-bus or on-tram machines are used are those generous cities where they are provided *in addition* to those at stops, but certainly put them in a more sensible place.

So, was this truly the right place to be investing in the 'ftr' concept anyway? First won't gain much from a change away from current generation (and equally stylish) Wrightbus Volvo B7Ls on route 4, though a higher frequency and 100% off-bus ticketing would have been worth doing. I also think that high-capacity articulated buses really come into their own on busy, relatively fast, straight routes (as in London). York's number 4 isn't in any of those categories. Like any 18m artic (and the StreetCar is 18.75m), manœuvrability is as good as a Mini Pointer Dart, but the constant right and left turns around Acomb don't strike me as the species' natural home.

I'm afraid the 'ftr' left me decidedly underwhelmed — sorry, undrwlmd. I await, with anticipation, the next scheduled performance in Leeds where First must learn some useful lessons before launching 'ftr' in a much bigger city with a hawk-eyed PTE and numerous politicians still seething with anger at Alistair Darling's cancellation of their Supertram.

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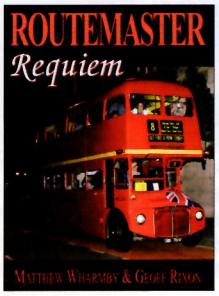

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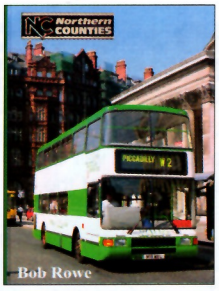

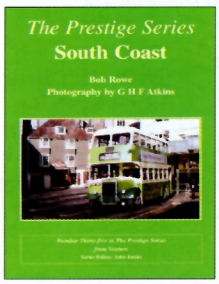

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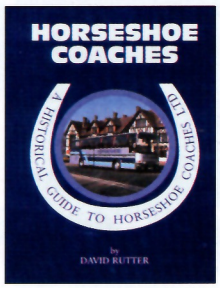

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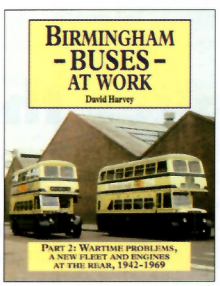

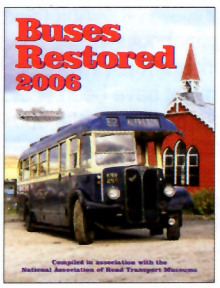

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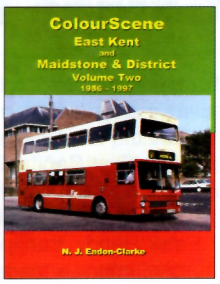

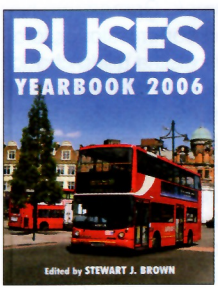

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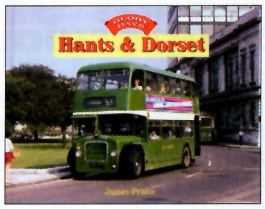

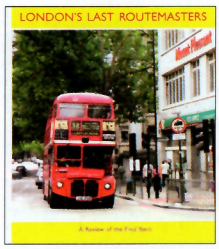

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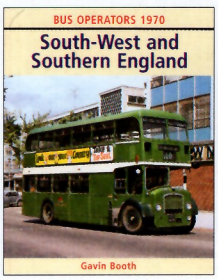

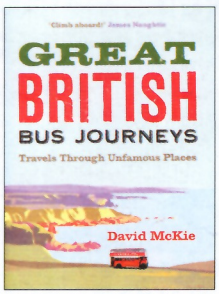

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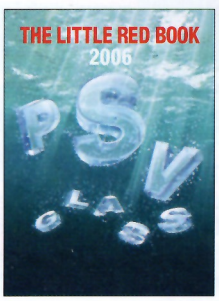

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Spectacular public transport plans for White City complex

A huge new retail development in West London, the size of a Bluewater or Lakeside, is scheduled to be completed in 2008. Unlike those two, however, this one is in the heart of an otherwise built-up urban area, at Wood Lane, north of Shepherd's Bush Green, and two-thirds of its shoppers are expected to arrive by public transport.

The Hammersmith & City line will get a new station there, Shepherd's Bush station will be remodelled and there will be a new railway station where at present there is none on the West London National Rail line. More to the point, there will be two new bus stations, one at each end of the site, and — unusually — a covered layover for terminating buses.

The south bus station is to be called the West London transit terminus, a name perhaps chosen as services terminating there include the 207 (Shepherds Bush-Hayes By-pass), which might one day become the West London Transit. Forty buses an hour will serve this interchange with Shepherd's Bush Central line station, but routes at present terminating there will run on to the main northern bus station. Adjacent to this will be the covered layover point. That will use a listed building, which dates from the original Central London Railway depot. Together with an adjacent listed building in the early part of the 20th century, the Dimco Lathe Company occupied it and the premises are still known as the Dimco buildings.

The whole development will cost £1.5billion, and includes provision of stabling for Underground trains under the new shops.

Above: Sullivan Bus LLW36 (L36 WLH), one of its ex-Metroline Wright Pathfinder-bodied Dennis Lance SLFs, operating the shuttle service between Staines and Thorpe Park leisure park. MARK LYONS

Above: East Thames Buses has hired spare London General Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TLs to replace single-deckers on the 180 (Lewisham-Belvedere Industrial Area), which in turn were transferred on to former Centra route 201 (Morden-Herne Hill). London General previously hired the Presidents — including PVL204 (X504 EGK), now ETB VP22 — to sister company Metrobus for another ex-Centra contract. GERRY MEAD

Summer relief takes the heat out of top decks

The first hot spell of the summer brought a comprehensive press release from Transport for London about the efforts (on both tubes and buses) it is making to reduce heat build-up inside vehicles. A minor part of this effort includes specifying white roofs on buses, as a practical and proven way of reducing heat absorption. Predictably this was a cue for the *Evening Standard* to come out with its usual anti-TfL stance with a claim that white roofs made no difference. To prove its point it painted a picture of a London United double-decker . . . with a grey roof.

The TfL figures are impressive, though one has to say that if complaints about stiflingly hot buses had been taken seriously earlier some of the expensive retrofitting might have been unnecessary. All told, 2,284 buses out of 8,000 now have additional opening windows, while 472 have new ventilation systems and 83 new buses this summer will have air cooling. All told, between 300 and 400 new buses enter service each year, with a similar number being refurbished, says TfL.

All the refurbished buses have thermostatically controlled heating systems and white roofs, while all new vehicles have body panel insulation and tinted glass. Since last summer, London Buses has invested more than £500,000 on these improvements, while it similarly spent £1million the previous year. By next summer, all 4,900 double-deckers will have the extra opening windows.

SHORT HOPS

Night buses now operate on 100 routes. Last year, they carried 34million passengers.

Children's free bus passes have so far been withdrawn from 400 schoolchildren for bad behaviour.

Mayor Ken Livingstone should provide 'hopper buses' in 'grey areas' like the High Street where big buses do not go, a businessman based in Marylebone High Street said after the annual ITV State of London debate.

OysterCard validation equipment will be provided in National Rail stations in all six zones, at a cost to Transport for London of £19million.

Garage building boost for TfL chiefs

Transport for London thinks it has found suitable sites for three new bus garages to replace the two Stagecoach East London and one First Capital East garages in Waterden Road, Stratford/Hackney that will be displaced by the Olympic Games.

Peter Hendy, transport commissioner for London, tells me there is also a good chance of TfL winning its appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the proposed North Acton garage. Local councillors turned down the application, although planning officers had recommended approval.

TfL is continuing its search for other possible garage sites across London. A replacement for Hounslow garage is a top priority since the adjacent bus station is bursting at its seams. So narrow are its pavements that buses cannot deploy their ramps. It is also going out to tender for builders of between 10 and 15 new garages that would then be leased to operators. Costs of building or refurbishing each are estimated at between £2million and £15million. The garages would have single or large-span steel-framed structures.

An intriguing section in the official tender notice describes the main activities of the contracting entity (that's TfL or London Bus Services) as urban railway, tramway, bus or *trolleybus* (my italics) operators. Now there's a thought . . .

New names for old places confuse the locals

When does an airport or aerodrome cease to exist? Plenty of airfields have become industrial sites, but which retain their old titles. Croydon Airport ceased to exist more than 50 years ago and today, while there is little trace of the runways or hangars, there is still the control tower, while the area remains known to locals as Croydon Airport. Seeing the name on bus blinds has brought the occasional wry smile, but locals know exactly where the bus is going even if the name is slightly misleading.

All that has changed, since Metrobus Scanias on the 119, which terminates there, now display 'Croydon Colonnades' as their terminus. That is accurate as the name for the leisure centre at which the buses terminate (opposite the control tower) but it is not well known locally. And just to confuse strangers, bus stop flags in the area still say 'toward Croydon Airport'.

Another example of a pedantic, but in this case unhelpful new destination came in May when Armchair took on the 493 (Richmond-Tooting) run previously by Centra. The destination display for Richmond-bound buses became just 'Manor Circus', with no mention of Richmond. The 493 enters the town from the east, serves all the centre including the railway station, and then continues north-east to its terminus by the Homebase store in Manor Road. Presumably that area is becoming known as Manor Circus because of the nearby roundabout, but that name doesn't even appear on bus maps. Helpfully, one or two drivers on the 493 are now displaying 'Richmond' (terminus of another Armchair route) on their blinds.

As illustrated last month, route 77A has been renumbered 87, thus eliminating letter suffixes – just as Transdev Yellow Buses in Bournemouth has been busy renumbering routes and giving them A and B suffixes. But if you take Transport for London's approach to its logical conclusion (and I hope it won't) then all routes with prefix letters should be next on the list. Why should R62, for example, be any easier to remember or less misleading than 77A?

Above: Metrobus Scania OmniDekka/East Lancs 909 (YN55 PZM) displaying the 'Croydon Colonnades' destination for the former Croydon Airport terminus.
ADAM MURRAY

Right: Buses still equipped with intermediate destination displays are starting to appear showing only two intermediate points, as on London Central Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TL PVL327 (PJ52 LWF) at Kings Cross.
RUSSELL YOUNG

Tram traumas and bus lane threats in Ealing

Just before Croydon's new tram system opened, I interviewed one of the senior people involved. In the course of conversation, rather than in response to a question, he said he did not think any new tram system could be created without the wholehearted support of the main local authority involved.

When the recent local council election results were announced, I immediately recalled this conversation. For Conservatives gained control of Ealing Council after a campaign fought largely on an anti-tram platform. The new council lost no time in dismissing the consultants who had been working with it and announcing its opposition to the scheme.

Sources within Transport for London tell me that the previous council wasn't very helpful in supporting the scheme and certainly had never emphasised benefits such as the urban regeneration that it would bring. However, Mayor Ken Livingstone is certainly still pushing ahead with the plans, with a decision on seeking powers to build due soon.

In any event, something will have to be done about the existing appalling traffic congestion in the area if the plans founder. The crossroads in the centre of Southall is a particular problem that is not going to go away. One bus driver recently told me he had spent half his Saturday shift more or less stationary in the centre of Southall.

Meanwhile, transport commissioner Peter Hendy has fired off a strong letter to the new Ealing Council leader to try and reverse a decision to suspend TfL-funded bus lanes and switch off enforcement cameras for 18 months on roads in Northolt served by routes E9, 282, 140, 120, 90, 398 and N7. 'These lanes were originally funded by TfL in 2002/03 following local consultation,' he says. 'They have contributed to, for example, an increase in bus speeds of 5 to 10% and a reduction in journey time variability of 40% for many thousands of users, both your own residents and those of neighbouring boroughs.

'Infrastructure funded by TfL should not be removed or substantially altered without our prior written consent. Failure to secure this consent or to engage in activities that are inconsistent with the implementation of the Mayor's transport strategy will put at risk future borough spending plan funding.'

He adds: 'I am prepared for officers to meet and review whether there are changes that can be made to the bus lanes and/or their enforcement, which will meet the needs of local residents and businesses while preserving the benefits of the lanes to bus users and cyclists. This could be arranged urgently.'

Whatever happened to...? ...Black Prince Buses

This time last year, we reported on the beginning of the end for Black Prince Buses of Morley, as First West Yorkshire stepped in early to take over its 88 route ahead of the rest of its services on 31 July.

Although it took over services, many of the drivers and some of Black Prince's Scanias, First didn't acquire the company or its premises. Items of value were removed from the depot, which was vacated soon after the takeover and I'm told it is likely to be sold for a retail development.

Although the Scanias moved to Kirkstall depot and sometimes operate into Morley, First was soon using an assortment of Leyland and Volvo Olympians on its main 51 route there, although new double-deckers may have taken over by now. Daniel Stazicker's pictures show the decaying remains of the depot in May this year and one of the Leylands on the 51.

SIGHTS YOU SHOULDN'T SEE BESIDE BIG BEN

I suspect many years will pass before the red Routemaster double-decker ceases to be an iconic image of London, and I have every confidence that red double-deckers of other types passing London landmarks will endure for future generations — certainly as long as there are red London double-deckers.

Sometimes, as the flyer from the Gascoigne-Pees estate agency reveals, the image is doctored a little to suit an advertiser's purposes. Graham Burnell, who passed it on to me, says it's 21 years since red RMLs last reached Surbiton — and the town's direct bus link to Big Ben has just gone with the replacement of night service N77 by a 24hr service on the 281 to Hounslow.

Other times, the image is far more fanciful. For a campaign targeted at Irish customers, mobile phone service O_2 has plonked a Dublin Bus Olympian on Westminster Bridge apparently *en route* from Hammersmith to the Phoenix Park. My thanks to Michael Dryhurst for tearing that one from an Aer Lingus in-flight magazine.

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August 1986 *Buses* reported that West Yorkshire PTE was bypassing the UK government in an attempt to keep alive its plans to reintroduce trolleybuses in Bradford and Leeds. Westminster had refused funding for services in Leeds on the basis that it would not be compatible with forthcoming deregulation. 'The Transport Act makes no provision for trolleybuses,' we reported, 'so the PTE could operate trolleybuses directly, under the direction of the PTA, and would not need to make its overhead available to other operators'.

On the basis that Bradford, unlike Leeds, qualified for European Regional Development Fund support, it was seeking £2.75million from Brussels towards the £8.5million it wanted for a 31-vehicle Leeds-Bradford-Buttershaw route. The stumbling block was that an approach to the ERDF could only be made by the UK government. Let's just say that you still won't find trolleybuses running in West Yorkshire.

WRITE DIRECT TO MILLAR'S TALES

Please send any stories, photos (prints or slides), cuttings and other information on off-beat bus matters direct to: *Buses* **PO Box 14644, Leven, KY9 1WX**

STRIPED HORSEBOX OF THE MONTH

CORGI

Where does a Stagecoach owner keep his horses? David Love, who wins this month's Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model for sending me an out-of-the-ordinary picture for these pages, reckons he may have found the answer. Apparently, the Scania horsebox — which he spotted recently at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum — has no connection with the Wee Knitting Buses other than a liking for their old striped livery, but it would be fun to think otherwise.

Keep your eyes open and camera ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the **new address**. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

For further information on Corgi, visit the website at www.corgiclassics.com *or for details of your local stockist, call Corgi customer services on 0845 603 9070.*

MADNESS IN THE MIDLANDS

When it comes to pointless bus stops, there can't be many less endowed of sharp apex than the edifice *(below)* that Tony Hunter encountered in Walsall. From what he tells me, it seems that the council went to the trouble of installing a nice Kassel kerb so passengers could step easily into their low-floor buses, but then someone from Centro erected a bus shelter along said Kassel kerb. The result? Passengers now board buses by a dropped kerb with an even bigger step than before.

SHOP WASN'T AT ALL AS IT SEEMED

The apparently Arriva-liveried greengrocers' shop in Bethesda (last month's Tales) has nothing to do with either Arriva or the late lamented Purple Motors. Its owner, Mr J. W. Jones, has been in touch with me to set the record straight. His father, who turns 94 in July, opened the business in 1950 and it has been in the family's ownership ever since. As for the aquamarine paintwork, he tells me he selected it some time before Arriva replaced Crosville green — and its other inherited colours — with a similar hue. Indeed, he still has the code number from the shop that mixed the paint especially for him. Now, if I wanted to let loose another red (or aquamarine) herring, I could start the rumour that Arriva's corporate ID people visited Bethesda one day, saw the shop front and immediately thought how good it would look on a few thousand buses . . . but they didn't.

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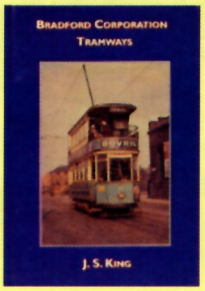

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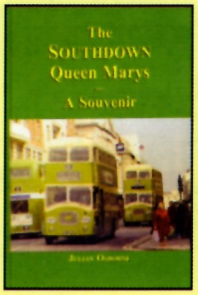

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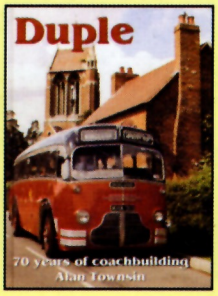

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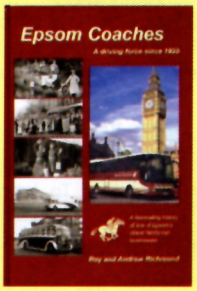

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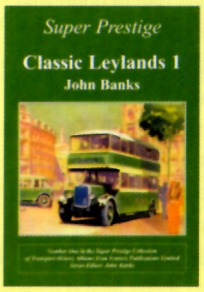

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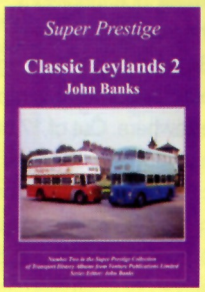

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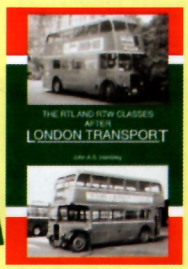

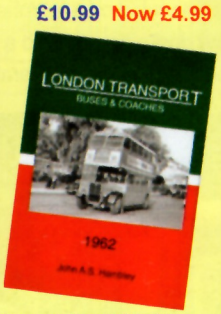

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The Uni-link fleet is becoming increasing varied. An Alexander-Dennis Enviro300, at Highfield Interchange on the U6H to the General Hospital. STEPHEN MORRIS

Uni-link: learning from First principles

Launched to overcome perceived shortcomings of the city's major operator, Southampton's university bus service has grown into a popular part of the public transport system. STEPHEN MORRIS tells the story so far

Like many such institutions, Southampton University — an international centre for oceanography — has had to cope with the logistical problems that come with growth. Besides its pleasant original campus on the city outskirts, smaller campuses have been added elsewhere. Out of 17,000 students, 5,000 live in halls of residence, and accommodating their cars is physically impossible. As the new campuses sprang up, there were demands for expensive library and other facilities at each. The university is situated almost as far inland as you can get in this seaside city, so students needed transport to the dockside Oceanography Centre, while medical students travelling to placements at the General Hospital faced an awkward journey by existing public transport.

The sheer numbers of oceanography students ruled out a planned minibus connection to the docks and instead a double-decker was hired from First. This operated non-stop from one end of the route to the other, so students living between the docks and the university had to make their way to the campus and double back on themselves. To John Waugh, involved in security and car parking, the solution was obvious. A dedicated bus service would obviate the need to build duplicate facilities on each campus, would get students to the Oceanography Centre, into town, to halls of residence and would remove the need for students to bring cars with them. Asked to take responsibility for the hired bus, he refused unless he could implement a more imaginative plan.

Left: The Uni-link network serves students and the general population.

He sketched out a basic map of what was needed and advertised for a bus-operating partner; the university's core business is education and research and he didn't want it to be deflected into running buses. Only First bid for the business and a three-year contract was drawn up, involving selling students a £90 annual pass, valid on all First buses in the city, and a new route was created to serve the university better.

His experience of Britain's largest public transport group was no more positive than that already gained by the students. 'It gave us three years to learn how things go wrong in the bus business,' he remarks. Apart from anything else, with First's penchant for shuffling management around there was no continuity in the people with whom he was dealing. 'They were unresponsive and we had no influence,' he says. Supervisory staff were moved out and not replaced and one issue serves to highlight the sort of inflexibility and lack of customer focus encountered. Passes for thousands of students were magnetic tickets and if they were lost or stolen they couldn't be stopped or replaced. 'It was like having a £90 note in your pocket,' he says. The university did,

Left: John Waugh of Southampton University, founding father of Uni-link. STEPHEN MORRIS

however, have records of pass numbers and it was suggested that revenue inspectors could check passes and take lost/stolen ones out of circulation. It transpired that there was only one revenue inspector — based in Fareham. First apparently considered there was no point in him coming to Southampton because it didn't think its drivers there were fiddling fares.

Customer care was not a priority, he continues, and driver training only involved route learning. He was determined that First's contract would not be renewed, and sought a new partner. 'First didn't really pitch for the business,' he recalls. 'It just assumed it would get it back.'

A fresh start

Two companies — one a local coach operator — submitted compliant bids for the business, which operates as Uni-link. The other was Chichester-based Minerva Accord, created in July 1999 after West Sussex County Council outsourced its highways, transport and grounds services to services group Accord plc. Its only bus operating experience was providing local authority schools and social transport but given John Waugh's experience with an established bus operator, he was happy to have a partner without entrenched attitudes. Minerva Accord secured a five-year contract in 2001, recently extended by two years.

John Waugh went out of his way to observe how bus services were run. In his view, fares were unnecessarily complicated, leading to arguments with passengers and long delays at stops. He opted instead for flat fares and off-bus ticketing. All 5,000 students in halls of residence were issued with a smartcard pass, and smartcards are also available to other users. Rather like London's OysterCard, these can be used as long-term season tickets or on a stored value basis, the latter available from drivers for £1 plus the value of travel added. They can be topped up on the bus. Southampton City Council also issues smartcards for its pensioners' free travel scheme, and new smartcard-ready ticket machines power the network's real-time information system. Uni-link runs a travel shop on the university campus where other students can buy long-term season tickets, which are loaded electronically on their university smartcards.

New vehicles were specified, with two doors as part of the drive to improve journey times. John Waugh would prefer three-door buses. They had to be accessible, with two wheelchair bays; this was not in anticipation of carrying lots of wheelchairs but to open up the interior layout and create flexible space. Students often stand in groups, even when seats are available.

Minerva Accord obtained nine dual-door Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dennis Darts, though used a collection of rental Darts before their arrival. Public address systems were specified, as drivers were encouraged to communicate with passengers. With PA systems came radios and tape players and a surprisingly popular tradition quickly grew up of Uni-link services playing local radio stations.

Uni-link's depot is next door to the Oceanography Centre, within the secure area of the docks, and right alongside the terminus, minimising dead mileage. Unfortunately, it lacks fuelling or washing facilities, so fuel is bought at quite high prices. Vehicles are hand washed by a commercial company in Southampton, ensuring that they are well presented and that paintwork is protected from abrasive washing machines.

The Uni-link service comprises three services. The trunk U1 starts in the docks, with connection to ferries. There are bus interchanges at Southampton Civic Centre ▶

Current fleet (20)

10-8 (HX51 LPJ-L/N/O/U/V/Y/Z)	10.8m Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus B26D
31-5 (YN04 YJR-U, YN55 NFP)	Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs H51/25D
37 (YN06 CGO)	Scania CN94UB OmniCity B—D
38 (MX55 NWL)	Alexander Dennis Enviro300 B44F
40 (FJ04 SNF)	10.8m Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Nimbus B34F
51/2 (PE55 WPP, WSU)	10.5m Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Myllennium B29D
79, 80 (HF06 FUA/B)	Mercedes-Benz Citaro O530 B39F

Above: Double-deckers in the fleet are Scania OmniDekkas, specified with two doors to speed boarding at busy stops. 31 (YN04 YJR) carries a rear-end advertisement from Southampton City Council suggesting the child's mother could have afforded a swim from the money she saved by going by bus. It is seen at the Oceanography Centre. STEPHEN MORRIS

Above: East Lancs Myllennium-bodied Dennis Dart 51 (PE55 WPP) awaiting departure from Southampton Central station on the free City-link service taken over from First, with OmniDekka 31 behind it on a U1C journey. DAVID JUKES

Right: Latest addition to the fleet is two-door Scania OmniCity 37 (YN06 CGO), seen on the main university campus. MALCOLM AUDSLEY

and a purpose-built one, Highfield Interchange, on the university campus, which also is served by National Express coach service 032 from London and Heathrow. It connects with trains at Southampton Central and Airport Parkway stations and serves the airport. The U1 also runs via Portswood, where many students not in residence rent accommodation.

Suffix letters are vital

Dual doors come into their own at Highfield, where buses pass through in both directions. As a result, the service runs as U1C when city-bound and U1A towards the airport. There is also an occasional variation, U1E, to Eastleigh.

The U6 route serves the General Hospital (U6H) and Highfield Interchange, then takes a more roundabout route via other campuses and halls and Portswood to the city centre and the Oceanography Centre: towards town it is the U6C. The U2 serves the halls and campuses to the north of the university, takes in Highfield Interchange and then provides a direct link to the Civic Centre.

Having built up a network based round the needs of students, two other services have since been added. Tauntons College, a sixth-form college in Shirley, requested a service and the U9 serves the college and the General Hospital: both institutions provide financial support for the service.

Then last year, Minerva Accord won a five-year contract to operate the City-link free shuttle service between Southampton Central Station, West Quay shopping centre and Town Quay, previously operated by First. The service carries over a million passengers a year, and is funded jointly by Southampton City Council, Red Funnel Ferries, South West Trains and Hammerson's, the developer of West Quay. Two new East Lancs-bodied dual-door Dennis Darts were obtained to run it; First used Optare Solos.

Steady growth

Uni-link passenger numbers have grown every year. The U1 started as half hourly, increased to every 20min and a successful bid for government Kick-Start funding has enabled it to run every 15min from April. It starts at 05.20 with a last journey back from Central Station at 23.20, with a largely similar service, though building up only to every 20min by mid-morning, on Saturdays and Sundays. Sunday afternoon journeys are as busy as any, mainly with students shopping at Asda.

U2 runs hourly from 07.00 to 19.00, with a half-hourly weekday service in term time through to 23.30. U6 is half-hourly (hourly on Sundays) and U9 is geared to Tauntons College

Above: One of the two Mercedes-Benz Citaros diverted from a Wilts & Dorset order, 79 (HF06 FUA), on the U1C. EAMONN KENTELL

requirements, though stays out all day giving a 90min service outside college hours, weekdays only. City-link is every 10min, less frequent early morning and evening, based around ferry times.

Demand exceeded the two-door Darts' capacity, so five two-door Scania OmniDekka double-deckers were added to the fleet, though John Waugh's preferred route is to use single-deckers on a higher frequency. The dual-door arrangement has not worked as well on these as on single-deckers, owing to the proximity of the staircase to the front door; alighting passengers block the way for boarding passengers, especially as boarding is quick thanks to flat cash fares and 65% of passengers using smartcards or some other form of off-bus ticket. Fares were increased for the first time in April this year, from £1 to £1.20, though £2 day tickets, multi-trip and longer-term tickets remain unchanged.

Further capacity has been achieved by acquiring two surplus single-door Mercedes-Benz Citaros, which were due to go to Wilts & Dorset; they are supremely comfortable vehicles with two-plus-one seating in the front part and air conditioning. A two-door Scania OmniCity and a one-door Alexander Dennis Enviro300 have also been added. At five years old the original Caetano/Darts, which John Waugh describes as 'a good design for us' are considered due for replacement.

Minerva Accord bills the university every month for provision of the service. For the first two years, the university provided a subsidy, but passenger growth — never less than 24% year on year — means this is no longer necessary and indeed the service is close to paying off its accumulated deficit. Growth has come from the general public as well as students; there is a substantial dip in use during university holidays, though the extent of the drop has remained constant in percentage terms as the passenger base has risen and holiday loadings are now as high as they were in term time when the service started.

To avoid some of the shortcomings identified with First, drivers are all given customer care training, although the company doesn't give driver training. John Waugh meets all new starters over lunch so they get to know each other. 'Some are the same drivers from First whose evident unhappiness was a major factor in the decision to create the Uni-link alternative,' he says, 'but they're now being recognised as nice friendly people.' Recent surveys show 87% of passengers consider the drivers to be polite and friendly, and 88% are satisfied with reliability. Training has even included a walking tour of Southampton City Centre with a Blue Badge guide to heighten drivers' awareness of the city's attractions. On-bus student assistants are hired at the start of each academic year to answer new students' inevitable questions and to keep the service moving.

From an unknown newcomer providing services for student five years ago, Uni-link has established itself as a significant part of Southampton's transport, with a friendly image and a smart, modern fleet.

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QUESTIONS

1) Which famous Winchester independent did H&D take over in 1973?
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2) In which colour did NBC repaint H&D's green buses from 1972?
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Frustration before joining the road to Dundee

JULIAN OSBORNE samples Stagecoach mainly as he travels between the three main cities of the east of Scotland

A note I made in 2002 — but never shared with you — still applies about the difficulty of getting out of Guild Street bus station in Aberdeen. I had assumed that the mess was temporary or related to the late afternoon hour. But here at lunchtime four years later, it's still a mess. Long phase traffic lights nearby and loads of traffic mean that every Stagecoach departure has to rely on the kindness of strangers to escape. I wondered if any of them were still on time by the time they managed it.

The boarding procedure for our Stagecoach/Citylink coach to Dundee was a bit of a mess, too. National Express can sometimes seem a little officious about such procedures — little signs saying 'DO NOT board until ticket inspected' and the door shut anyway or the young lady fresh out of school I once heard tell a bunch of old ladies at Digbeth to 'form an orderly queue' — but this was chaotic. The queue that was focused on the front of the coach had to bend right round to reach the driver at the rear luggage locker and then turn again to enter the central door.

A second official appeared after a while also to take tickets, but the chance of someone boarding without one was high — unlike those many NatEx occasions where the chance is low but the driver keeps the door shut while loading luggage for a handful of passengers. In Aberdeen, there was no on-board check before departure. Actually, they could have probably done what some Brunei operators used to do — have a 'conductor' check tickets as the bus headed for the exit and get off again. They'd have plenty of time in Aberdeen.

Washing was in progress at St Andrews garage and our B10M bus from Dundee needed it after a filthy day crossing the Tay Bridge constantly. Stagecoach Fife — which has since upgraded this route with new MAN 18.220s — appears to run two fleets — one of smart new buses and equally smart cascaded London Olympians and another of older vehicles showing signs of hard use. Olympian 14704, which we caught from Leven to Kirkcaldy, had upper-deck windows that steamed up randomly, frustrating photography of oncoming buses, and a loud graunching noise when braking in reverse. B10M coach 52441, on which we had proceeded from St Andrews to Upper Largo, was tatty inside and the driver had to resort to a folded fare table to keep the sunblind where he wanted it.

Stagecoach uses coaches all over the country on express routes but I had not appreciated until this trip that, when needing to leave *en route*, they appear to have no bells. You need to get within earshot of the driver in good time. A slightly melodramatic Australian on board commented to a friend that missed stops were common. Our coach the next morning, 52254, was also looking pretty tired inside.

Mrs O was travelling with me on this occasion, so I was even more sensitive to customer service issues than usual. She is particularly averse to waiting (beyond scheduled time) and to 'being thrown about'. We did not need to wait anywhere, but one or two journeys were quite exciting when the bus was in danger of running late. The relative speed of Scottish buses has not changed. In 1972, I glided north from Aberdeen on an Alexander (Northern) that appeared to have all the time in the world and then continued from Elgin to Inverness on a Highland that seemed to go at 50mph from end to end regardless of bends, level crossings or anything else. Western SMTs always seemed to be driven similarly. In 2002, my Bluebird south to Aberdeen pottered happily along while the Stagecoach Westerns up the Ayrshire coast were still hurrying. As indeed was 52254 as it kept to its X26 timetable to Glasgow.

In general, Stagecoach delivered its usual high standard of service throughout. The friendly driver of our last coach — from Kirkcaldy into Edinburgh — was solicitous about giving us the best deal for our money. Our Fife Goldriders could not be used beyond the Ferrytoll park-&-ride at the Forth Bridge, but the best single fare onward was from a different place than the best return fare.

Lothian and West Yorkshire

Brightonians eye Lothian with interest as they meet them frequently in customer service award finals. We had some reservations about the sightseeing double-deckers we used, with some over-expeditious driving for a bus on which people are admiring the view and trying to take pictures, variations in the commentary (we covered one bit twice) and deviations from the advertised route. And I wasn't enamoured of the corkscrew staircases specified until recently, preferring the straight ones common elsewhere. But there's excellent information about the buses available — and indeed on them — and buses are frequent, even on Sunday. The fleet is modern and well presented and the staff helpful and friendly.

West Yorkshire was less eventful. Just good service, with First generally providing smarter vehicles than Arriva, which provided my only late bus of the day; indeed, the regulator at Dewsbury seemed puzzled by the notion that it was due at a set time. Not that other Firsts weren't late — the 503's boast of a bus every 10min seemed to translate into two every 20, but a lot of the blame for that probably lies with Kirklees and Calderdale councils' traffic management policies. I like West Yorkshire bus stations — except that, as they are all to the same good design, one can forget where one is. They are much cleaner since smoking was banned.

First has a lot of new stuff in West Yorkshire. Two of the routes I used sport buses in which we, the secured custom, sat cocooned in advertising designed to attract more people to join us. First tells me that ridership is up on those routes, but that it has yet to analyse what part of that increase has been delivered by the stuff on the windows. I have to say that I don't like it, preferring the sort of unrestricted view I get in, say, a car but await further analysis with interest.

Left: Stagecoach Bluebird 52293 (N153 XSA) making the difficult exit from Guild Street bus station, Aberdeen. Having succeeded in blocking traffic coming from the right, its driver is awaiting a gap in the flow from the left. This coach is similar to the Stagecoach Fife Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10Ms on which the Osbornes made three journeys. BOB McGILLIVRAY

101 uses for a (far from) dead Routemaster

Not so many years ago, most of London's last Routemasters would have gone for scrap, but Ensignbus has found buyers for the lot. As JOHN G. LIDSTONE reports, this has been a painstaking task

Steve Newman is candid about why his family's Purfleet, Essex-based Ensignbus dealership bought up most of London's last Routemaster double-deckers. 'It was more of a heart — rather than a head — decision,' he says. When I saw him earlier this year, the last 50 were being prepared and despatched. 'They're all sold now, but we've got a waiting list of around 300 people still wanting to buy one, all of whom we regard as serious potential sales.

Above: With its 773 VW Essex trade plate already in the windscreen, Ensign prepares to collect RML2315 from storage at Arriva's Tottenham Marshes garage. Most pictures by JOHN G. LIDSTONE

'In a funny kind of way, Routemasters are rather like Spitfires were at the end of World War 2,' he adds. 'Ten-a-penny and they could be bought for the price of the fuel in their tanks. How grateful we'd be now if somebody had bought a hangar and filled them with Spitfires.' Ensign did just that; it bought several hangars and filled them with Routemasters, among other lesser metals. If it hadn't, many could have been scrapped, just like most RTs were 30 years ago.

In fact, he says Ensign has yet to scrap a single Routemaster. 'I think that's quite an achievement. Even the 16 that we bought in partially cannibalised condition have been put aside. They can either be sold to customers who only require a basic Routemaster shell in some kind of static capacity such as a play area, or will be refurbished to a running condition should that be necessary later. It's all a case of matching individual vehicle to individual customer.'

Right and below: RML2754 has been converted into a mobile display unit with powered access ramp in the second bay downstairs. The upholstered box conceals the electricity generator.

Media interest kicked in as soon as Ensign announced it was selling the Routemasters, its switchboard jammed almost daily with potential customers. This reached what it says was a 'quite insane' level toward the closing days last December with such stunts as Peter Cockcroft delivering a BBC London weather forecast from an Ensign RML, with the whole early evening news bulletin fronted by a presenter wandering among the sales stock (notably with RCL2220 in view, with Ensign's phone number conveniently on display). 'We got quite a few enquiries after that,' he says with a smile.

Few of the earliest expressions of interest turned into serious intents to purchase, and Ensign spent a great deal of time describing the Routemaster, especially to commercial customers who probably don't know one end of a bus from another. Many sought to buy one on a marketing whim, a fad that will probably wane as last year's hype fades away.

'Buyers really come in three main categories,' he explains. 'First, the enthusiast who knows all about the vehicle. Second, bus operators who want one for special events like weddings. And then businesses that want to buy them, mostly for promotions of some kind or other, either

Right: Conversion and refurbishment work inside one of the Ensign hangars. The ex-Arriva bus on the left is RML2754, which has gone to GE Healthcare.

viewing them as advertising hoardings (thinking of the exterior only and not the interior), or as mobile exhibitions, sales units or classrooms. Then you get overseas sales.' However, only around a quarter were exported.

A time-consuming process

Ensign contracted to take all of Go-Ahead and Arriva's stock, as well as a lot of First's surplus examples. After selling some of its buses by itself, London United found the process so time consuming that it offered the balance to Ensign. Steve Newman intended to work full-time on the Routemaster project, but ended up having to borrow a City Sightseeing colleague to help out with the volume of work.

'We found the effort of successfully selling a Routemaster was far higher than for, say, an Olympian, which might have five to 10 times the sale value, and which would often be bought in fives or tens,' he says. 'People bought Routemasters singly, and each individual sale took a lot of explanation. Things like how to maintain a vehicle of their kind of age and what's needed for basic maintenance.' Customers took advantage of Ensign's expertise and spent two or three days on-site with its engineers.

Although most of the smartest Routemasters were withdrawn first, the poorer examples became available as the market woke up. 'I could have sold the later ones five times over, whereas the earliest ones were slow to sell,' he explains.

Worldwide television made the biggest difference, catapulting sales skyward – almost literally in one case. 'The London bus is in record books as a measurement of size the world over, and one particular customer wanted to use one to demonstrate the prowess of the world's greatest catapult.' This fell foul of Ensign's responsible sales policy of trying to prolong vehicles' lives, so it politely deflected interest to a less iconic type, but I never did find out what, if anything, ended up being pitched skyward.

Celebrity buyers included orchestral conductor and composer André Previn. Lord Lloyd Webber bought one as a gift for his friend Cameron Mackintosh, who had vacated a theatre to enable a Lloyd-Webber show to be put on instead. He positioned the restored Routemaster outside the theatre, adorned with 'thank you' posters.

While some commercial buyers viewed their Routemasters solely as advertisement hoardings, others focused their attention on the interior space and the uninitiated fell foul of the combination of the arrangement of mechanical units and the open rear platform. For example, a static vehicle in the UK must comply with building regulations. 'These insist on full accessibility, so you have to fit a ramp and lift at the front,' says Steve Newman. Fill the interior with display equipment and you overlook the need to maintain access to items like the gearbox inspection trap. Some customers needed to be reminded to distribute heavy display materials on both sides of the buses, not all on one side, or away from load-bearing axles.

Business customers were encouraged to come forward with their own designs, but these often came from consultants who had never seen a Routemaster in the metal, resulting in all sorts of complications.

Ensign turned scruffy RML2754 into an immaculate display vehicle for GE Healthcare, kitting it out with a generator in the lower deck to power plasma screens in both decks as well as power points in between the seats. Besides all the new equipment installed — and a wheelchair ramp and lift installed forward in the lower saloon — GE insisted on the finest livery detail. It specified that seats (and the generator housing) be retrimmed in original LT moquette, but walls and ceilings were repainted brilliant white.

Steve Newman says there have been few mechanical problems with the buses sold so far. 'This is largely due to purchasers having acquired their vehicles pretty soon after coming out of service, benefiting from having been serviced every 28 days. Once they start to stand around, that's when problems can ▶

Below and inset: Caterpillar-engined RML2316 in Gray Line Tours service in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 1 June this year. Inset shows the engine installation before export.
Halifax picture by C. M. CLARKE

Left: Former Arriva RML2726 back at Ensign — between an ex-Citybus, Hong Kong coach and a Metroline Volvo Olympian — after Argos found it didn't require an engineering spare.

Above: One of the most unusual preserved Routemasters is ex-Metroline RML2284, which has been converted to single-deck, repainted and fitted out as a Southern Region railway carriage. It turned a few heads at this year's Cobham Bus Museum gathering.
ALAN MILLAR

start to occur. Things like electrical contacts for the gear control.

'Routemasters are extremely reliable, but some problems can occur through ignorance of the type, its basic maintenance and ignoring warning signs that should be heeded,' he says. 'Owners don't always follow commonsense, perhaps driving for 30 miles after noticing a burning smell. Then we get the call from the roadside, when they've really only got themselves to blame.' The thing to remember is that Routemasters were built and serviced regularly to carry people locally round London, whereas customers who only use theirs once or twice a year and then expect to drive several hundred miles down the motorway place new strains on their buses.

This level of reliability may have cost a few earlier sales. Argos, for example, bought RML2502 to publicise its shops. With company pride at stake, it also bought RML2726 as a spare, but the first one proved so dependable that partly equipped RML2726 went back to Ensign for resale.

Export business

Overseas sales have been to much more diverse customers. Some were sold for sightseeing, such as at Niagara Falls, where Steve Newman reckons the stock of over 30 is now the world's largest. Ambassatours of Halifax, Nova Scotia has just bought 10 RMLs to supplement its standard length RMs. These include London General's little-known unique Caterpillar-engined RML2316, which took longer to sell. Ensign hoped to sell it for preservation in the UK, but its unusual engine scared away potential purchasers. However, this proved a blessing in disguise for the Canadian operator had already bought a Routemaster and re-engined it with a Caterpillar unit.

Often, overseas customers looked to turn Routemasters into mobile or static food outlets like a bar or a tearoom. Many were shipped and converted locally in order to comply with regulations in their new countries. German buyers were keen to turn them into teahouses and French ones into restaurants. 'We've got through gallons of red paint, and acres of London Transport fleetnames go to these kinds of buyers,' he says.

Shipments to the European Union were relatively straightforward. The buses were steam cleaned, animal hygiene regulations adhered to, and just a V5 certificate drawn up for them along with proof of export. The 4m continental European height limit equates to the beading above the upper deck windows, so special arrangements must be made with the police of each country through which the vehicle passes. The record delivery run was to Kuwait, achieved largely overland and without mechanical trouble.

Your RM is the sum of its parts

If you still fancy owning your own Routemaster, how confident should you feel about finding the necessary spare parts? Besides acquiring a considerable number of parts in its own right, Ensign has also acquired the parts stocks from each operating company as it ceased to operate the type. It works closely with the Routemaster Owners & Operators Association, which bought the parts removed from the vehicles refurbished by Marshall Bus at Cambridge to the order of Transport for London. So things like original window winders or a light-bulb units have been available for restoration work.

Besides that, a cottage industry has sprung up, with small companies manufacturing or re-manufacturing Routemaster parts. Ensign has supplied original parts from its traditionally finished examples as patterns for new parts to be made, helping dealer, buyer and preservationist. 'It's a case of win-win all-round,' says Steve Newman.

While original AEC engines are hard to come by, the Wilson gearbox presents no problem, as these can often be easily refurbished and come back to the vehicle complete with a one-year guarantee. 'The most awkward parts are always those trims and original fitments like original radiator grilles,' he says. 'It's a case of either you've got them or you haven't.' But Ensign seems to have a knack of always knowing someone, somewhere to source whatever is required.

. . . and a 102nd use for one that didn't get away

Among the Routemasters retained by London bus companies for continued commercial use is London General RML2318, which helped provide service 718 (London Eye-Hampton Court Palace) on 4 to 9 July for visitors attending the Hampton Court Flower Show. GEOFF RIXON

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Do today's buses need to shed weight?

Having recently celebrated his 80th birthday, ALAN TOWNSIN — *Buses Illustrated* editor from 1959 to 1965 — thinks it may be time for operators and manufacturers to rethink a fundamental feature of vehicle design

The editor has invited me to contribute a piece to mark my 80th birthday, which occurred in March. This is no longer all that big a deal, yet it still came as a shock to realise I've been hooked on buses for nearly 70 years, beginning when I first travelled to school that way in the autumn of 1936. The brisk performance and distinctive sound of petrol-engined Newcastle Corporation AEC Regents first caught my attention. The seed so planted influenced the course of my whole life, and I'm still hooked today.

As my interest developed, it grew into an early career in vehicle engineering, in 1951-55 in the drawing office of AEC and, from 1957-61, Thornycroft. Over the top of these activities, my involvement took a fresh direction, writing about buses. At first, this was mainly for *Buses Illustrated,* as it was then, and I took over as editor when E. J. Smith died in 1959. I used to call it my part-time full-time job, often working until 02.00 to get the next issue out on time. From 1961, I became a full-time writer and editor, continuing with *BI* until 1965. The curiosity that started it off remains as strong as ever and the likeliest thing to make me feel I have had a good day is discovering something 'new', even if it concerns something well back in bus history, followed by an urge to set it down so and share it with others.

At the risk of being dismissed as a 'grumpy old man', I cannot say I feel very happy about some of today's bus designs. I feel the industry needs another of the radical reappraisals that have occurred several times over the past century of motorbus history, almost all related to weight. Some of these were greeted with alarm when first put forward, yet unexpected benefits usually ensued, quite apart from the direct effect of applying innovative minds to the problem.

Above: Fifty-seven years separate these two double-deckers on the Yorkshire/Lancashire frontier. Todmorden Corporation 2 (GWU 12) is a 1948 all-Leyland lowbridge Titan PD2/1 53-seater now owned by East Lancs Coachbuilders chairman David Powell. First West Yorkshire 32540 (YJ05 VWE) is a 2005 Volvo B7TL with low-floor 73-seat Wright Eclipse Gemini body. At 26ft, the Titan is 7.9m long, compared with the 10.7m Gemini.
DAVID POWELL

Lessons from the past

Motorbuses first became commercially attractive from March 1905, when an increase in the permitted unladen weight of a heavy motor car to 5ton made it practical within the technology of the time to build a big enough bus to generate sufficient revenue to pay its way. The streets of London proved fertile ground for bus development, where Victorian legislators' dislike of trams had given the horse-drawn bus more scope than in most major cities, certainly in Britain and possibly anywhere.

In March 1910, a drastic reduction in unladen weight to 3.5ton came into effect for buses operating in London, in those days under the control of the Metropolitan Police. Good designers soon met this new limit without loss of seating capacity, typically 34 on a typical open-top double-decker. Notable among the compliant vehicles, even if only just, was the London General Omnibus Company B-type, reputedly among the most refined, reliable and durable buses of its day. An unforeseen side effect was that hitherto dominant imported buses soon faded from the scene.

World War 1 led to vast numbers of rugged military lorries being built, and in the aftermath many provincial bus companies were built up by fitting passenger bodies to such vehicles. New bus design altered little until the mid-1920s.

Left: The author's interest in buses was first awakened by Newcastle Corporation AEC Regents such as this one with Park Royal body from a 1931 batch, which he recalls had very comfortable seats. Its newly developed 110mm-bore 7.4litre petrol engine gave a lively performance. It is at Castlegarth, the town terminus (at the 'new' castle) of service 6 on which he travelled, sometime during the 1936-39 period in which he used it, although the destination blinds suggest it had just arrived from Byker depot.
ALAN TOWNSIN COLLECTION

Left and below: Typical of buses built immediately after World War 1 is Mike Sutcliffe's beautifully restored Leyland SG7 of 1923, ex-Brooke Bros of Rhyl. With forward control and a wheelbase of 16ft 6in, it seated 40 passengers and weighed 6ton. Such buses were almost all withdrawn by the early 1930s. The blue and yellow Eastbourne Corporation all-Leyland Lion PLSC3 of 1928 represents the more nimble single-deckers produced to comply with legislation that was never enacted. These buses generally weighed a little over 4.5ton and quite a few remained in public service until after World War 2. ALAN TOWNSIN

Another proposal to legislate in favour of lighter vehicles encouraged a further bout of innovative design. This plan was for buses not exceeding 3.75ton and on pneumatic tyres to be allowed to run at 20mph — at that date this limit was supposed to apply to traffic in general, including private cars — as opposed to the then existing 12 mph bus limit. A few makers produced single-deckers that qualified — the original SOS S-type as built by Midland Red for its own use and the AEC 411. Leyland's new Lion PLSC just exceeded the proposed weight limit, which didn't matter too much as that part of the planned legislation was never applied. Even so, a whole class of lighter single-deckers, livelier than predecessors and with such other modern features as lower build, had come into existence, influencing subsequent designs.

By the 1930s, the boot was on the other foot. Weight limits were relaxed a little, though now based on gross vehicle weight, but vehicle specifications became more elaborate, including diesel engines and improved transmission, as well as more comfort for passengers. The 10.5ton limit that applied to two-axle double-deckers in the late-1930s (along with 26ft by 7ft 6in maximum length and width) meant that a standard 56-seat urban bus could weigh little more than 6.75ton unladen — a limit that must seem incredibly tight to today's designers. Yet such vehicles were almost all reliable and efficient, the limiting factor sometimes being body durability. The best proved capable of 15 to 20 years' service, occasionally more, despite frequent heavy loading and some neglect during World War 2.

Weight crept upwards in wartime — aluminium was largely reserved for aircraft — and in post-war conditions, with many vehicles long overdue for replacement, sturdy construction was understandably seen as desirable.

The post-war era

Few people pursued lightweight construction in the early postwar years and it is intriguing that a modest-sized bodybuilding concern, J. C. Beadle of Dartford, interested both the Tilling group and London Transport in its ideas on this subject in 1945-47, the former taking various batches of Beadle integral single-deckers using aluminium alloy for the structure and the latter raising the question of a possible double-deck version. That never happened, but did it start the line of thought leading to the Routemaster?

Tilling, with a high proportion of rural routes, developed its own light single-decker, the 30ft long Bristol/ECW LS ('Light Saloon') of the 1950s, which seated up to 45 passengers. The onset of more difficult times, with falling revenues and rising costs, led others to pick up a similar theme, the best-known being the Leyland Tiger Cub and AEC Reliance, in both cases with conventional though light chassis.

Two 'serious' attempts at radical redesign of double-deckers with reduced weight among the main objectives were the Routemaster and Leyland's rear-engined Lowloader, of which only two prototypes were built.

The real technological advances of the Routemaster are apt to be forgotten today amid often over-played nostalgia. Although often seen today merely as the final survivor of the halfcab era, when it was designed over half-a-century ago, one of the main objectives of the Routemaster was a reduction in weight compared to its predecessor, the RT, despite carrying more passengers in greater comfort. Another was the improved suspension, chosen mainly to improve stability despite the larger proportion of upper-deck passengers, but giving far superior ride quality than many later vehicles.

Other mid-1950s lightweight double-deckers, notably the Metro-Cammell Weymann Orion body in its original 'monstrous masses of shivering tin' form, to quote an Edinburgh Baillie's immortal comment, seemed to me to cheat in terms of fair comparison by reducing comfort and finish, yet leaving the fairly heavy chassis designs barely altered. The Routemaster didn't cheat and, judged even by 21st century standards, remains a 'civilised' bus in which to ride, quite apart from proving capable of outliving many later and much heavier models despite the modest unladen weight of 7.75ton for the later 72-seat RML version.

Changes in legal length limits sometimes clouded the issue, longer versions of lightweight single-deckers tending to move into a heavier class than their predecessors. Unfortunately, the basic merit of keeping weight down was apparently forgotten altogether in some design offices and seems barely to have been considered in the Leyland National. It was ▶

Left: A classic lightweight underfloor-engined Tilling group single-decker in the shape of Western National 1663 (MOD 954), a 1952-built Bristol LS5G with Eastern Coach Works 41-seat bus body. In 1969, buses of this type were still achieving over 15mpg on hilly routes. PHOTOBUS

Left: Is there a case to re-invent the dual-purpose single-decker for interurban routes? Western SMT Leyland Leopard AL2639 (OSJ 639R) typifies hundreds of Alexander Y-type examples in Scottish Bus Group fleets. In a mid-1970s scene in Ayr bus station, this 49-seater is alongside a Leyland Titan PD3A/3 with 67-seat lowbridge Northern Counties body. ALAN MILLAR

ironic that many National Bus Company subsidiaries found themselves running this heavy and thirsty model after decades of careful attention to such matters, particularly when the Tilling group and some BET companies, notably Midland Red, had full charge of their vehicle policies.

Are today's ideas sensible?

New conventions of bus design do not always seem logical. For example, it seems that modern buses almost all have to be of low-floor type, regardless of the duty for which they are meant, yet coaches often have much higher floor levels than before.

Perhaps I'm out of fashion, but the idea of sitting low down in a sort of bathtub with poor views of the passing landscape, especially directly ahead, holds little appeal; this applies even in a strictly practical sense when unsure of where to alight. Not only does it compare poorly with past practice for longer country routes — think of the Alexander Y-type bodies once much favoured in Scotland — but even more so with travel in even the most modest car.

On longer routes, is there not a case for something akin to the old dual-purpose category, with an intermediate floor level, high enough to eliminate wheelarch intrusion and with more comfortable forward-facing seats? Careful entrance design, with several shallow steps a better bet than fewer deep ones, can make such vehicles reasonably accessible to almost all passengers where boarding times need not be tight. Clearly, it is a matter of degree and I accept that the low-floor bus is helpful to young mums with pushchairs.

As an oldie, I am well aware of the need to cater for people with disabilities — my late wife was increasingly disabled by rheumatoid arthritis. However, she had to give up bus travel several years before she gave up driving a car, because of the difficulty and hazards of getting to or from a seat.

The Disability Discrimination Act has had some strange and even counter-productive effects. Providing seats for only 38 passengers in an 11.3m single-decker seems wasteful of space to me even if, at least in theory, it also carries 23 standing passengers, the latter thus treated as an inferior category. Aside from the safety aspect, expecting any passenger to stand longer than, say, 10min is an imposition.

I even wonder whether the carriage of *any* standing passengers is desirable in the safety-conscious 21st century, since they must always be at greater risk of injury and falls than those who are seated. It seems ironic that a modern bus may condemn more passengers to stand simply because there are fewer seats than there would have been in an equivalent model of 40 years ago.

I still think that there is a strong case for the double-decker for urban service and the busier types of medium-distance route, mainly because of its economy of road space while carrying large numbers of people in reasonable comfort. This applies especially in British cities with many streets following much the same plan and rarely much wider than they were 200 years ago; this looks less likely than ever to change. An 18m articulated single-decker occupies as much road space as two 30ft double-deckers, which between them will carry 140 or more passengers, *all* seated, and create far less disruption to the flow of traffic.

I come from a generation taught that waste was sinful, a view reinforced by the war years, but surely similar attitudes, especially in regard to the use of increasingly expensive fuel, will be more widely accepted in the future. That shouldn't mean that the sense of pride that used to emanate from the vehicles of the best operators, right down to such details as appealing liveries, should be forgotten. The industry must persuade passengers used to car standards to travel by bus. The vehicles need to look smart, enhancing the street scene in which they inevitably are prominent, and be comfortable.

But perhaps most important of all, when will new buses approach their predecessors' fuel economy? When I was editor of *Bus & Coach,* Brian Hancock, then chief engineer of Western National, provided me with an analysis of that fleet's operation in 1969. The average fuel consumption for its Bristol Lodekka FLF6G double-deckers over that year was 12.1mpg, for RELL6G single-deckers 12.84mpg (these had semi-automatic transmission, some working on urban services) and for LS5G 'Light Saloons' then the standard country bus running on often quite hilly routes, 15.28mpg. Even the latest VRT double-deckers returned 9.85mpg on urban services in the Plymouth area. All the foregoing types had Gardner engines. How many modern buses could even approach such figures? No one knew about global warming then but nowadays there is even more justification for a frugal approach.

Considered from such a perspective, articulated buses that block junctions in the same way as I remember observing in Continental cities 40 years ago and which return about 4mpg hardly make sense. The fact that some are designed to look like modern trams of similarly expensive ilk, are called StreetCars and have drivers titled 'pilots', seems to me merely to underline the folly, reflecting a basically cynical approach to the public. Whatever happened to the principles of functional yet elegant design?

Right: Clever idea or a cynical folly? A 'pilot' steers his 18.75m long, 42-seat First York articulated Wright StreetCar-bodied Volvo B7LA, 19005 (YK06 ATX), under the city walls. KEITH McGILLIVRAY

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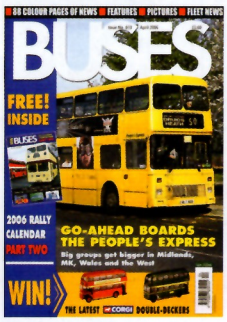

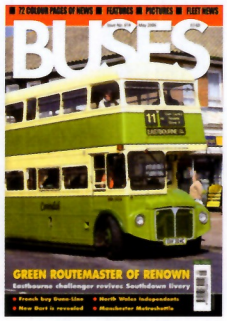

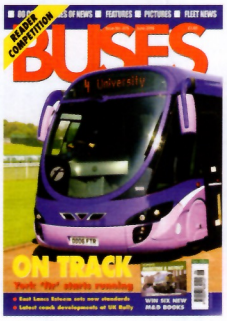

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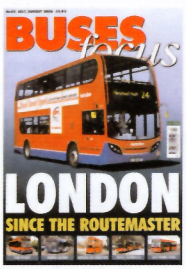

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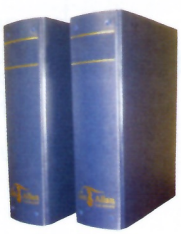

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WORLD CUP FEVER

Some of the buses and coaches that became caught up in England's flag-waving support for its national football team in the World Cup competition in Germany in June and July

Above: National Express repainted two of its Irizar PB-bodied Scania K114EB coaches in England colours with 'Nation Expects' fleetnames in corporate style. For the past two years, it has also decorated one of these coaches in a green version of this livery to celebrate St Patrick's Day and honour the Irish community in Birmingham. BEN MORROLL

Middle left: Travel West Midlands — the main part of the National Express bus division — provided free transport to the big screen public television broadcasts of World Cup matches in Birmingham, using its former London United Volvo Olympian coaches with Alexander Royale bodies. These were decorated in T Mobile-sponsored vinyls. BEN MORROLL

Left: Even the British Gas advertisement by the roadside has a football theme in this view of JP Travel, Middleton V387 HGG, a Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart decked out inside and out to support the English team. Although registered in Glasgow, this is one of a trio of MPDs new to Ashall's of Clayton in 1999. IAN HENRY

Above: Stratford Blue combined England flags above the top deck windows with a red ribbon when it provided its Routemaster RML2565 (JJD 565D) for a June wedding hire.
RICHARD SHARMAN

Middle left: South-west London-based Blueways Guideline Coaches has two out of its six coaches painted in official England sponsorship livery, including Irizar Century-bodied Scania tri-axle W4 ENG, seen crossing Putney Bridge.
GERRY MEAD

Left: Wilts & Dorset named 23 of its More-branded single-deckers after the members of the England squad. Here, managing director Alex Carter (left of the More fleetname) joins members of the Sturminster Marshall Youth Football Club in helping name a Wright-bodied Volvo B7RLE after captain David Beckham.
WILTS & DORSET

YOU WRITE

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AA DRIVING LESSON
AA driving school

From the bus ticket enclosed with this letter, it appears that Arriva Yorkshire is positively discouraging people from travelling by bus.

I cannot understand the logic of the offer on the back of the ticket of a free driving lesson should you decide to learn to drive by using the AA's school of motoring. I do not have any argument against people wanting to drive. I drive and also use public transport (some may even decide to become one of that rare breed — a bus driver — in later life), but it does seem odd that when bus companies want more passengers, they allow driving schools to take advertising space on their tickets.

Can we expect next an offer sponsored by a car manufacturer on the lines of 'collect 100 bus tickets, bring them into your nearest XYZ car dealership and we will give you £1,000 off the purchase of a new car'?

Advertising does help to offset costs, but let's give this as an example. Do you think that the operator of Eurostar would sell advertising on its trains for low cost airfares to Europe? Allow advertising, yes, but to actively give oxygen to a competitor's products is surely cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.

Ian R. Lawton
Wakefield

Buses and coaches and competition law

I was pleased to read that Brian Cox (Inside Track, June) agrees that the bus industry should not be exempt from competition law. I also agree with him that the current Competition Commission enquiry into long-distance coach services in Scotland is fundamentally flawed. The 'relevant market' under consideration should be Scottish long-distance public transport as a whole (bus, rail and air).

Where I probably disagree with him is in respect to the debate he once heard between Caroline Cahm and Sir Bryan Carsberg, who is typical of the extreme free market thinking that still dominates at the Office of Fair Trading. OFT economists are convinced that competition in local bus services is a good thing, even though it (effectively) prevents integration of ticketing and timetables.

As I have said on countless previous occasions, deregulation is the antithesis of integration, and regulation by competition authorities is a necessary corollary of the freedom that the 1986 deregulation gives to bus operators. I find that my many bus passenger friends and colleagues regard both these points as blindingly obvious. Only those within the bus industry (or close to it) do not seem to accept their validity.

Dr Roger Sexton
Nottingham Trent University

Passengers bewildered by Teesside cuts

On 30 April, Arriva North East introduced wholesale service reductions on Teesside, in effect creating a totally new network of services and leaving many areas with no services. In the local press, an Arriva spokeswoman claimed that the changes have been 'well received'. By the shareholders, maybe, but I have yet to hear a passenger or driver say a good word about them.

Apart from the actual service changes, some of them unbelievable, we have totally inadequately sized buses operating. Midibuses are leaving Middlesbrough bus station with full standing loads, making it impossible for passengers to board anywhere else in the town centre.

Aside from the operator, the local unitary authorities — Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Darlington – do not emerge with any credit. In the days of Cleveland County Council, when the period of notice for changes to services was only 42 days as opposed to the current 56, the timetable inserts in Middlesbrough bus station and other town centres would be updated on the actual day of the changes, and all other stops were updated within a few days. This time, a week and a half after the introduction of the changes, there still were no new times up in any of the town centres. The old Arriva ones were taken down in the bus station and not replaced. On the first day, some of the new services were shown on the television monitors in the bus station, but others weren't, while other services that had ceased to operate were still shown, adding to the total confusion.

While Arriva deserves credit for at least having produced timetable leaflets for its new commercial services by the day they started, it did not produce any form of summary leaflet to explain what was going on, and one had to gather what information one could for the new services piecemeal as the new leaflets appeared. Worse still, and again the fault of the local authorities, Arriva produced a new leaflet for evening supported service 99 (Middlesbrough-Darlington) only for it to be apparently pulled off at the last minute. It is beyond me how the local authorities managed to get dispensation to withdraw the service without the 56 days' notice; one reason for the 56 days' stipulation is surely to allow existing users to make alternative travelling arrangements. Meanwhile, publicity for the new supported services being introduced to plug gaps in the service was nil. Despite the 56 days' notice, it seems that the local authorities were still deliberating over what services were to be introduced a matter of days before the changes. In fact, after a week of no evening service between Middlesbrough and Darlington, a new service was introduced as far as Elton, but I don't know how anyone is supposed to know about it as I have yet to see any publicity for it whatsoever.

It is high time that the local authorities that pay for supported services actually put one of their own people in Middlesbrough bus station to publicise them, as at the moment would-be passengers expecting to receive unbiased information are met by personnel of Stagecoach or Arriva who give out information on their own services (and each other's) but not on any of the other operators providing a good proportion of the tendered services, thus leaving passengers even more bewildered.

Ian Wilson
Middlesbrough

A sign of these timetabling times

A sad sign of the times was demonstrated to me recently. Uni-link, which provides a small and successful network of services primarily to cater for the needs of Southampton University students, but available to all (see p22), asked for comments on a change of style to its timetable publicity.

During an exchange of e-mails, I commented upon the practice of providing suffix letters according to the direction of travel, which I, at least, found confusing. I had pointed out that, surely, a destination screen was adequate, and that I always found it amazing that students who could backpack around the world with ease, often had such difficulty in using a local bus. Perhaps unkindly, I also mentioned that until the fairly recent past, all seven-year-olds could read a complicated rail timetable, merely because it was part of their general education and now is not.

While Uni-link gave me a detailed reply and explained its reasons for the various points

I had raised, it also added that 'catching the bus for anyone anywhere is a daunting exercise at any age . . . and they are finding many of their students have never travelled on a bus in their lives'. Sadly, they are, of course, quite right.

So, to an older generation, for whom catching a bus is no more difficult than putting out a milk bottle, to a younger generation still old enough to fight for Queen and country, catching a bus is 'daunting'. If this really is the situation, and I see much of it in my daily travels throughout the British Isles, short of painting buses by route colour, in the hope that those who cannot read at all (apparently an ever increasing number) will recognise them, the future for bus travel looks very bleak indeed.

Terence Uden
Woking

No need to explain busmen's jargon

When I worked in the London Transport schedules office in the early 1970s, the term 'interworking' meant ensuring that where two or more routes ran over the same section of road, the times were evenly spaced. This is what is meant in the Travel London leaflet (Publicity Matters, May) and I doubt that many people would misunderstand this. Travel London should be applauded for mentioning it. Most operators don't bother.

Jack Wilkinson
Lewes

Another view of Transport Direct

Until now, I have always admired the journalistic skills of Stephen Morris, but his piece on Transport Direct (Inside Track, July) was very disappointing and possibly even deliberately misleading. Perhaps the root cause of the article's inadequacy is the phrase 'briefed by Transport Direct'.

Transport Direct (TD) has no data of its own. It merely imports it from Traveline. This means that, in general terms, errors in Traveline (and recognised by Mr Morris) are usually absorbed seamlessly and without challenge into TD, which is well known (by real users, rather than 'briefed' journalists) for delivering complex and unwieldy answers when a simple solution is readily available. Try, for example, Grove Park, Chiswick to Grove Park, Lewisham.

A golden rule in information provision is that you can either be comprehensive or comprehensible, but not both. Without a single central database, TD has to jump through all sorts of complex electronic hoops to import, manipulate and re-deliver data from the regional Traveline systems. Combine this with the heavily over engineered list of bus stops (admired by Mr Morris) each of which is defined by eight pages of standard A4 computer printout and you have a comprehensive system so heavily overloaded with 'stuff' that it is slow and difficult to use.

It is becoming increasingly clear that systems like TD are possibly useful for an experienced user who had a good idea what the right answer is going to be, who needs confirmation of some detail or is confident in the main leg of a journey but wishes to explore a little wider. The potential new bus user, however, needs the confidence of simplicity of use, route maps and real timetables all supported by a living person on the phone or in an enquiry office with the essential ingredient of good local knowledge. Despite TD, Traveline, real time, bus lanes and even First's flawed 'ftr', bus travel still decays inexorably. One of the reasons must be the increase in information secrecy — not helped by poor results from Transport Direct.

How about spending some of TD's £30million on re-staffing local enquiry offices? The Xephos system was always designed to be a full national data service delivered locally and, combined with a telecoms system that linked an easily remembered single phone number with appropriate area dialling codes and real live people, it would represent a significant saving on the expense of TD and Traveline. An interesting bonus could even be that non-public transport users might actually be able to find out when and where the various buses run.

Peter White
Xephos, Isle of Wight

● *Stephen Morris replies — I am slightly confused as to why Peter White considers it such a crime for me to have been briefed on a subject. I have taken the rap on numerous occasions down the years for being insufficiently briefed on a topic, so at least this is a first.*

I was briefed two or three years ago by the Department for Transport as part of my work for Bus Users UK, it is true. I own a computer, use the internet and travel by bus, rail, car and other modes and sometimes use Transport Direct to get the relevant information to do so. What part of that process makes me not a user, I wonder?

Having also been briefed on occasions down the years by one Mr White on his Xephos product (should I have declined, perhaps?) I would have hoped he would know me well enough to know that I would not be 'deliberately misleading' in any walk of life, especially my professional life, and while I am the first to admit I don't always get it right, I hope he will withdraw such a serious and unfounded allegation.

Actually, I do find the ability of Transport Direct to pinpoint any bus stop in the country a useful feature, regardless of the technical complexity it may involve, and I think I made it perfectly clear that I regard Transport Direct as a useful starting point but not the be all and end all of transport information. It may well be impossible to combine comprehensiveness with comprehensibility, but both the strength and weakness of the nationwide bus network is its very complexity and, even though my use of it to find out how to make real journeys for some reason does not make me a user, I find Transport Direct makes a very creditable stab at squaring that particular circle. I would agree it is an expensive tool and I was trying to make the point, too, that the amount of money spent is not reflected in high usage and high awareness of it, which is a shame. I think I made that point in the article.

And just in case Mr White's allegations are intended to have a hidden subtext, to set the record straight, not one penny of those millions has in any way lined my pockets. I don't even remember getting a cup of tea.

What happens when 'ftr' reaches Leeds?

I was interested to read the report in last month's *Buses* about the problems encountered in York with the First 'ftr' concept vehicles, as these problems seem likely to repeat themselves in Leeds when route 4 (Whinmoor-city centre-Pudsey) is converted to this type of vehicle in the autumn.

Currently this is a high frequency Overground route with an operating day of around 18hr, the first bus being scheduled to leave the Whinmoor terminus at 05.16, while the last bus from there terminates in the city centre at 23.30. The route is approximately 12 miles end to end and on a regular basis the schedule is thrown into disarray by city centre congestion. In addition, the Pudsey end of the service traverses some narrow suburban roads with tight bends not ideal for an articulated vehicle.

The ticketing arrangements could also prove problematical as the only two possible outlets for off-bus ticket sales are in the city centre and the current clientele of the service tends to comprise the groups in society without internet and mobile phone access, so charging of premium on-bus fares may cause ridership to drop. Equally, the increased boarding times will further dislocate the service.

This service is currently maintained by a mixed bag of vehicles and most certainly not the articulated Volvos mentioned in *Buses*, which have worked route 1 (Lawnswood-Beeston) since their arrival. When I spent over an hour recently at the Pudsey end of the route, the following vehicles appeared: an A-registered Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian; a Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale ex-First Edinburgh; a Scania/Alexander single-decker bought by Yorkshire Rider; an ex-First London all-Leyland Olympian; and from the enthusiast's point of view the high spot, an East Lancs-bodied Scania double-decker new to Kingston upon Hull City Transport in the 1980s and which arrived in Leeds via the First Manchester schools unit.

Not a low-floor bus in sight, but seats for most if not all intending passengers and Leeds passengers, in common with most citizens of this country, expect a seat when parting with their cash for a journey. Standee buses were unpopular in Leeds in the 1950s and the public's outlook has changed little since then.

Service 4 would definitely benefit from a vehicular makeover, perhaps with Wright Gemini double-deckers, but I think that 'ftr' is a step too far. I hope First Leeds has done its homework properly and got its sums right, but I fear the worst.

Chris Hough
Farsley, Pudsey

More steps up in a low-floor

It has been good to see our editor stick his head above the parapet in recent issues, allowing some of the politically correct assumptions which have held sway for far too long to be questioned. May I add my tuppenceworth of support?

My old mum isn't too steady on her feet nowadays, but she is quite happy to embark on a Women's Institute excursion in a high-floor, step entrance 'inaccessible' coach. However, she has had to give up on local buses because wide entrances leave her unable to reach the handrails on both sides and she fears the long walk on a moving bus, from the driver past the luggage bays and wheelchair spaces, to the first available seat. There are many more elderly people than wheelchair users.

Yesterday, I made a rare trip to Glasgow and found myself looking down a line of single-deckers in Ingram Street. Noticing by chance that the tops of First's fine new B7RLEs stuck out above the rest, I began to pay more attention and was surprised to recognise what appeared to be the lowest member of the line-up. It was a B10M with Alexander PS body.

Commonsense dictates that, in simple terms, the roof is placed high enough to allow adequate headroom throughout the vehicle. This suggests either that Wrightbus is hoping to attract passengers wearing top hats or the reality, which is that the rearmost passengers in the B7RLE have to do a lot of climbing to get to their seats — perched over a vertical engine in what is supposed to be a low-floor bus.

The B10M is, we are led to understand, a nasty inaccessible machine that should be forced off the road, either by direct legislation or as a consequence of tendering requirements. Yet its 49 seats — that's six more than the B7RLE and seven more than an 'ftr' — must make it safer, as will its flat saloon floor. What price progress?

Carrying on the B10M theme, I'd like to ask a rhetorical question. Why is it that Stagecoach's B10Ms with PS bodies convey their passengers smoothly, quietly and efficiently whereas in Glasgow most of First's (even the ex-Stagecoach examples) lurch erratically around the city, roaring along at maximum governed rpm to no obvious effect?

Stuart McPherson
Dunblane

I need wheelchair access

With respect to Steven Ford (You Write last month), I am appalled by his comments. I am a wheelchair user in an electric wheelchair. I use public transport (i.e. buses) every day to and from work. I could feel sorry for myself and let the government look after me, but I don't. I work, which I couldn't do without low-floor buses.

I think Mr Ford would have a different perspective on life if he were in a wheelchair and dependent on buses. Let's hope that he will never need to use a wheelchair in the future or experience the frustration of waiting, in winter, at bus stops when step-entrance vehicles have been put on his route, and having inconsiderate able-bodied passengers who tut and huff when the driver asks them to move from the wheelchair space. Perhaps, Mr Ford, you need to spend a week in a wheelchair so you can experience the harsh realities of life as a wheelchair user.

Alistair Stewart
Cradley Heath, West Midlands

Buses are not singled out

I hesitate to extend the dialogue between myself and Mr Uden (You Write, June) on the balance between disability access and the amenity of other passengers, but must challenge his claim that I have backed up his view that 'legislation is only applied rigidly to buses'.

Consider South West Trains, refused permission to continue operating Class 458 units beyond July. Why? Because the lettering on their passenger information system has 32mm high lettering, and the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations require 35mm. I take no position on the issue (though it is difficult to see who benefits if a service is cancelled because of a 3mm shortfall in lettering height). But I think this example shows that while the regulations vary between different modes of public transport, this is not a case where the bus industry is singled out for enforcement action.

Gwyn Griffiths
Crewe

Non-opening front windows

Is it actually illegal nowadays for new double-deck buses to have opening windows across the upper deck windscreen? If not, would some enterprising bus designer please reinvent them? A place in eternal Paradise surely awaits.

Chris Weston
London E17

Beauty in the eye of the East Lancs beholder

I take issue with your article (*Buses* June) on the new Esteem and East Lancs Coachbuilders in general, and more to the point its so-called 'ugly buses'.

I have had a long association with East Lancs, one way or another, going back 23 years and, to my mind, the only ugly buses it produced were the EL2000 single-decker and some of the first Leyland National Greenways. Although its double-deckers may not be in the same league as, say, Wright's, the current design is far more pleasing on the eye than the Alexander ALX400 or even the Plaxton President.

East Lancs's quality has improved tenfold over the past few years and build time is down by over a third. And as for your comments that no manufacturer can survive on fewer than 300 buses per year, well where are all the once big producers, the likes of Metro-Cammell Weymann, Park Royal, Charles Roe and, more recently, Northern Counties? Keep on going East Lancs for the next 20 years, celebrate your centenary and prove all those sceptics wrong.

David Barrow
Bury

Accurate and balanced

The article in June *Buses* on East Lancs was interesting, and I thought very accurate and well balanced.

David Powell
Chairman, East Lancs Coachuilders

An East Lancs EL2000-bodied Scania N113CRB in the Stagecoach Yorkshire fleet, 28650 (K413 MSL) was new to Tayside in 1993 and was among the vehicles acquired with Traction Group last December. DANIEL STAZICKER

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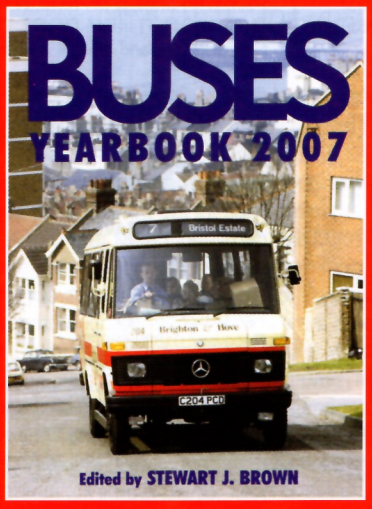

Buses Yearbook 2007

August, as always, sees the publication of the new edition of Buses Yearbook, an event eagerly anticipated by many bus enthusiasts. This year's edition contains the usual varied mix of articles and photo features which so many enjoy, dealing with both historical and contemporary subjects. Topics covered in the new 2007 edition include digital bus photography, Highland Omnibuses from the 1950s onwards, driving on trans-Pennine routes in the 1970s, researchikng rare bus photos and takeovers in the bus industry in 2005.

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£13.99

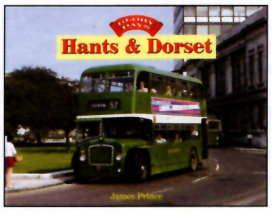
London Buses Around Kent

For some 50 years, London Transport's red and green buses were a familiar sight across much of Kent. This book is a colourful tribute to the many and varied LT operations in Kent, from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s. In some 85 colour illustrations, the majority previously unpublished, this book explores LT services in both the urban and rural parts of Kent to provide the reader with a fascinating survey of bus and coach services in this part of the Garden of England.

ISBN: 0 7110 3112 6 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
80pp | 85 colour photographs

Published July Published

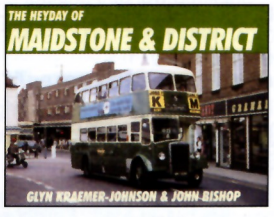
£14.99



Glory Days: Hants & Dorset

The latest title in the popular 'Glory Days' series, recounts the history, from its origins through to the mid-1970s, of one of the best-known operators on the south coast. Hants & Dorset dominated bus services in rural Hampshire and Dorset with routes linking the major urban centres such as Bournemouth, Southampton, Salisbury and Swanage and also served a range of holiday destinations which made the company well known to transport enthusiasts outside the area.

ISBN: 0 7110 3105 3 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
96pp | c125 colour & b/w photographs | **£16.99**



The Heyday of Maidstone & District

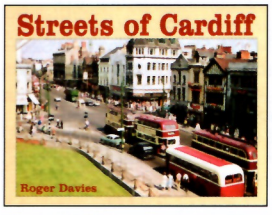
One of the best-known names in the British bus industry, this book records the evolution of the company and its fleet from the late 1950s, when it was still a subsidiary of BET, through to the mid-1970s, when the NBC's corporate identity started make an impact. The book will delight those who knew and used the services of M&D during the period covered and will bring back many nostalgic memories for bus enthusiasts.

ISBN: 0 7110 3115 0 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
80pp | c85 colour photos | **£14.99**

Bygone London

This new compilation, illustrated almost exclusively with unpublished archive colour photographs, accompanied by detailed captions, examines how London changed in the years between the end of World War 2 and the 1960s. With a strong emphasis on transport, alongside the photos of the trams, buses and trolleybuses, are rare colour images portraying the Festival of Britain in 1951 and other facets of Metropolitan life during these years.

ISBN: 0 7110 3107 X | HB | 184mm x 240mm | 80pp | 82 colour photos | **£14.99**



Streets of Cardiff

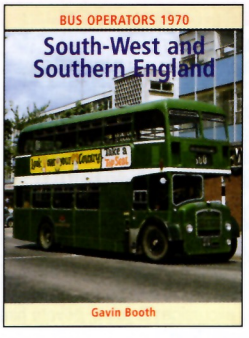
A pictorial tribute to the variety of public transport visible on the streets of Cardiff from the mid-1950s through to the mid-1970s, the era when colour photography was becoming popular. The photos and their informative captions not only provide details about the bus or trolleybus featured, they also explore the city's streetscape and note how this has changed over the years. These books have caused many to reflect on how the once unique appearance of individual British towns and cities has been replaced by the increasing uniformity of today's urban landscape.

ISBN: 0 7110 3098 7 | HB | 80pp | 184 x 240mm
95 colour and 1 b/w photographs | **£14.99**

Routemaster Requiem

This is a highly illustrated tribute to the last years in service of a vehicle which was as much as British institution as a means of urban transport. The chronological sections examine, through text and photographs, the build up to the conversion of each route and how the actual conversion was marked on the day, providing a unique record of the gradual elimination of the Routemaster from London.

ISBN: 0 7110 3145 2 | HB
280 x 215mm | 96pp
192 colour photos | **£16.99**



Bus Operators 1970s:
The South-West and Southern England

The latest title in our new series examines bus and coach operations in the south and south west of England in 1970. These were dominated by NBC subsidiaries such as Devon General, Southern National, Western National, Bristol and Hants & Dorset. Serving many holiday destinations, West Country operators provided numerous summer-only services which are also featured in the book.

ISBN: 0 7110 3034 0 | HB
280mm x 215mm | 80pp
80 b/w & 94 colour photos | **£16.99**

Available from your local stockist, the Ian Allan Bookshops in Birmingham, Cardiff, London and Manchester or post free to UK addresses (Europe - please add 15% min £4.50) from our mail order department:

Ian Allan Publishing Mail Order Dept (BX) | 4 Watling Drive | Hinckley | Leics | LE10 3EY

Tel: 01455 254450 | **Fax:** 01455 233737 | **email:** midlandbooks@compuserve.com | **Visit our website:** www.ianallansuperstore.com

All prices and specifications are subject to alteration.

A new section for LRB 2007 is Lifting Equipment and this will be steadily expanded during the year. An asterisk by the entry (*) denotes a reply sent in by operator/manufacturer/service provider. The Little Red Book is published in September, in time for the coach and bus shows in the Autumn.

TRADE DIRECTORY

new section LIFTING EQUIPMENT

***AUTOLIFT LTD**
Forge House, Norwell Woodhouse, Newark NG23 6NG
Tel: 01636 636586
Fax: 01636 636101
E-mail: info@autolift.freeserve.co.uk

OPERATORS

DERBYSHIRE

***BOWERS COACHES**
ASPINCROFT GARAGE, CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH SK23 0NU
Tel: 01298 812204
Fax: 01298 816103
E-mail: kenny@bowerscoaches.co.uk
Web site: www.bowerscoaches.co.uk
Man Dir: Michael Bowers Tran Man: Kenny Duncan
Fleet: 34 - 7 single-deck bus, 6 coach, 19 midibus, 1 minibus. 1 van.
Chassis: 2 Dennis. 5 Leyland National. 1 MAN. 9 Mercedes. 10 Optare. 4 Scania. 1 Setra.
Bodies: 4 Alexander. 2 Irizar. 5 Leyland National. 10 Optare. 5 Reeve Burgess. 1 Setra. 3 Van Hool.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours.

***FELIX BUS SERVICES LTD**
157 STATION ROAD, STANLEY DE7 6FJ
Tel: 0115 932 5332
Fax: 0115 932 6096
Man Dir: G Middup Ops Dir: I Middup
Co`Sec: C Middup
Fleet: 12 - 6 single-deck bus, 3 coach, 3 minibus.
Chassis: 1 Irisbus. 2 Leyland. 1 Mercedes. 2 Optare. 3 Scania. 2 Volvo.
Bodies: 2 Leyland. 2 Optare. 4 Plaxton. 3 Wright.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours.
Livery: Red/Gold
Ticket system: Wayfarer TGX

***JOHNSON'S BROS TOURS**
GREEN ACRES, HODTHORPE, WORKSOP S80 4XR
Tel: 01909 721847
Fax: 01909 722886
E-mail: enquiries@johnsonstours.co.uk
Web site: www.johnsonstours.co.uk
Dir: Tony Johnson Ops: Lee Johnson
Ch Eng: Antony Johnson
Fleet: 98 - 40 double-deck bus, 10 single-deck bus, 40 coach, 1 double-deck coach, 3 midibus, 2 midicoach, 3 minicoach.
Chassis: 1 Bova. 1 DAF. 2 Ford. 2 Ford Transit. 7 Irisbus. 7 Iveco. 1 LDV. 40 MCW. 20 Mercedes. 5 Neoplan. 1 Optare. 3 Scania. 1 Toyota. 5 Transbus. 10 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Autobus. 5 Beulas. 2 Berkhof. 1 Bova. 40 ECW . 3 Irizar. 3 Jonckheere. 5 Neoplan. 5 Van Hool.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours, express.
Livery: Blue faded.
(also Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire)

***LITTLE TRANSPORT LTD**
HALLAM FIELDS ROAD, ILKESTON DE7 4AZ
Tel: 0115 932 8581
Fax: 0115 932 5163
Recovery: 07919 020835
E-mail: enqiries@littlestravel.co.uk
Web site: www.littlestravel.co.uk
Fleetname: Little's Travel
Dirs: Steve Wells, Paul Wright
Fleet: 20 - 11 double-deck bus, 9 coach
Chassis: 3 Bova. 4 DAF. 5 Leyland. 2 Leyland National. 1 MCW. 4 Scania. 1 Volvo.
Bodies: 3 Bova. 5 East Lancs. 1 Ikarus. 6 Leyland. 2 Leyland National. 3 Van Hool.
Ops incl: excursions & tours, private hire, school contracts, local bus services, continental tours.
Livery: White
Ticket system: Almex

***MYKANN COACH HIRE**
29 WARREN DRIVE, LINTON, SWADLINCOTE DE12 6QP
Tel: 01283 762673
Fleet: 2 coach
Chassis/bodies: 1 MAN. 1 Setra.
Bodies: 1 Jonckheere. 1 Setra.
Ops incl: private hire, school contracts.
Livery: White

***SLACKS TRAVEL (K V & G L SLACK LTD)**
THE TRAVEL CENTRE, LUMSDALE, MATLOCK DE4 5LB
Tel: 01629 582826
Fax: 01629 580519
E-mail: enq@slackscoaches.co.uk
Web site: www.slackscoaches.co.uk
Man Dir: G L Slack Ch Eng: R M Slack
Co Sec: D R Slack Tran Man: J Gough
Fleet: 19 - 15 coach, 2 midicoach, 2 minibus.
Chassis: 5 DAF. 3 Dennis. 2 Ford. 2 Ford Transit. 3 Iveco. 2 Mercedes. 1 Neoplan. 1 Scania. 1 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Autobus. 3 Beulas. 1 Jonckheere. 1 Mercedes. 1 Neoplan. 5 Plaxton. 5 Van Hool.
Ops incl: excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours, school contracts

***WARRINGTON COACHES**
THE COTTAGE, ILAM DE6 2AZ
Tel: 01335 350204
E-mail: info@warringtoncoaches.co.uk
Web site: www.warringtoncoaches.co.uk
Prop: Sheila Warrington
Fleet: 7 - 4 coaches, 3 minibus.
Chassis: 1 BMC. 2 Dennis. 3 Leyland. 1 Mercedes.
Bodies: 1 Autobus. 1 BMC. 3 Leyland. 2 Plaxton.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, private hire
Livery: Red/Cream+Silver
Ticket system: Setright

DEVON

***A B COACHES LTD**
WILLS ROAD, TOTNES INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, TOTNES TQ9 5XN
Tel: 01803 864161
Fax: 01803 864008
E-mail: abcoaches@btconnect.com
Web site: www.abcoaches.com
Man Dir: Brian Smith
Dir/Co Sec: Lynn Smith
Fleet: 11 coach.
Chassis: 3 DAF. 8 Dennis.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire.
Livery: Cream/Red

***CARMEL COACHES**
STATION ROAD, NORTHLEW, OKEHAMPTON EX20 3BN
Tel: 01409 221237
Fax: 01409 221226
E-mail: carmelcoaches@hotmail.com
Web site: www.carmelcoaches.co.uk
Prop: Tony Hazell.
Fleet: 19 - 3 single-deck bus, 12 coach, 4 minicoach.
Chassis: 1 Albion. 1 Bova. 2 DAF. 5 Dennis. 2 Marshall. 5 Mercedes. 1 Optare. 3 Scania. 1 Toyota.
Bodies: 2 Autobus. 1 Berkhof. 1 Bova. 1 Caetano. 2 Duple. 2 Irizar. 1 Marcopolo. 1 Marshall/MCV. 1 Optare. 2 Plaxton. 1 UVG. 3 Van Hool. 1 other.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours.
Livery: White
Ticket System: Almex

***DOWN'S MOTORS & OTTER COACHES**
1 MILL STREET, OTTERY ST MARY EX11 1AB
Tel: 01404 812002
Tel: 01404 811128
Fleetname: Otter Coaches
Ptnrs: W M Down, A G Down, C P Down
Fleet: 10 - 9 coach, 1 midicoach.
Chassis: 3 Bedford. 1 Bova. 4 Dennis. 1 MAN. 1 Toyota.
Bodies: 1 Bova. 4 Caetano. 2 Duple. 3 Plaxton.
Ops incl: private hire, school contracts, excursions & tours.
Livery: Ivory/Red

***HEMMINGS COACHES LTD**
POWLERS PIECE GARAGE, PUTFORD, HOLSWORTHY EX22 7XW
Tel: 01237 451282
Fax: 01237 451920
E-mail: hemmingscoaches@aol.com
Props: Ken & Linda Hemmings.
Fleet: 7 - 6 coach, 1 midicoach.
Chassis: 1 DAF. 1 Leyland. 2 MAN. 2 Mercedes. 2 Toyota. 1 VW. 2 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Bova. 2 Mercedes. 1 Neoplan. 1 Noge. 2 Plaxton.
Ops incl: excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours, school contracts, express.
Livery: White

***HILLS SERVICES LTD**
THE GARAGE, STIBB CROSS, LANGTREE, TORRINGTON EX38 8LH
Tel: 01805 601203
Fax: 01805 601476
Recovery: 01805 601102
E-mail: hills.servicesltd@btinternet.com
Dirs: David J Hearn, Mrs M E Hearn
Fleet: 27 - 14 coach, 3 midibus, 10 minibus.
Chassis: 4 DAF. 2 Ford Transit. 10 LDV. 3 Mercedes. 9 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Bova. 5 Jonckheere. 1 Mellor. 2 Plaxton. 2 Reeve Burgess. 6 Van Hool.
Ops incl: excursions & tours, private hire, school contracts.

***PLYMOUTH CITYBUS LTD**
1 MILEHOUSE ROAD, PLYMOUTH PL3 4AA
Tel: 01752 662271
Fax: 01752 567209
E-mail: md@plymouthbus.co.uk
Web site: www.citycoach.co.uk
Chmn: R Simmonds
Man Dir/Co Sec: J Ackroyd
Eng Dir: C Webster Ops Dir: P Smith
Fin Controller: I Perring
Fleet: 177 - 22 double-deck bus, 79 single-deck bus, 14 coach, 1 open-top bus, 33 midibus, 28 minibus.
Chassis: 109 Dennis. 1 Leyland. 32 Mercedes. 35 Volvo.
Bodies: 15 Alexander. 8 Mercedes. 153 Plaxton/Transbus. 1 other.
Ops incl: local bus services, excursions & tours, private hire. continental tours, school contracts.

***POWELLS COACHES**
2 BARRIS, LAPFORD EX17 6PT
Tel/Fax: 01363 83468
Ptnrs: J P Powell, D M Powell, W P Powell
Fleet: 7 coach.
Chassis: 3 Leyland. 1 MAN. 1 Mercedes. 2 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Duple. 1 Jonckheere. 1 Mercedes. 1 Neoplan. 3 Plaxton.
Ops incl: excursions & tours, private hire, school contracts.
Livery: Yellow/Green/White

***REDWOODS TRAVEL**
INDUSTRIAL PARK, HEMYOCK EX15 3SE
Tel: 01823 680288
Fax: 01823 681096
Recovery: 01823 680288
E-mail: info@redwoodstravel.fsnet.co.uk
Web site: www.redwoodstravel.com
Dirs: Paul J Redwood, Brian J Redwood
Fleet: 21 - 17 coach, 3 minibus, 1 midicoach.
Chassis: 2 DAF. 1 Iveco. 3 LDV. 3 MAN. 3 Scania. 9 Volvo.
Bodies: 1 Beulas. 2 Caetano. 3 Irizar. 2 Jonckheere. 2 Noge. 6 Plaxton. 2 Van Hool. 3 LDV.
Ops incl: school contracts, excursions & tours, private hire, continental tours
Livery: White/Red/Green (palm trees)

***STREETS COACHWAYS LTD**
THE OLD AERODROME, CHIVENOR, BARNSTAPLE EX31 4AY
Tel: 01271 815069
Fax: 01271 817333
E-mail: sandra@streetscoachways.co.uk
Dirs: S Street, H Street, S Popham
Fleet: 13 - 7 coach, 3 midicoach, 4 minibus
Ops incl: private hire.

***TALLY HO! COACHES**
STATION YARD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, KINGSBRIDGE TQ7 1ES
Tel: 01548 853081
Fax: 01548 853602
E-mail: info@tallyhocoaches.com
Web site: www.tallyhocoaches.com
Man Dir: Simon Wellington
Fleet: 45 - 3 double-deck bus, 6 single-deck bus, 25 coach, 8 midibus, 3 midicoach.
Chassis: 1 Bedford. 2 DAF. 7 Dennis. 3 Ford Transit. 2 LDV. 12 Leyland. 12 Mercedes. 3 Scania. 1 Toyota. 2 Volvo.
Bodies: 5 Alexander. 1 Caetano. 4 Duple. 3 Irizar. 3 Marshall. 1 Mercedes. 2 Optare. 17 Plaxton. 3 Reeve Burgess. 5 Van Hool. 1 Wadham Stringer.
Ops incl: local bus services, school contracts, private hire.
Ticket system: Almex

***TAVISTOCK COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**
GREENLANDS, ST ANN'S CHAPEL, GUNNISLAKE PL18 9HW
Tel: 01822 833574
Fleetname: Tavistock Country Bus
Chmn: R Pike Hon Sec: K Potter
Hon Treas: R Crosbie
Fleet: 1 minibus
Chassis: Iveco
Body: G M Coachwork.
Ops incl: local bus services, private hire.
Livery: Red/White
Ticket System: Wayfarer
(also Cornwall)

** - manufacturer supplied update*

A well-polished guidebook

CHRIS CARTER has nothing but praise for Brighton & Hove's *Bus Times* magazine format timetable guide, which soon will reach its 40th edition

Go-Ahead-owned Brighton & Hove has produced *Bus Times*, its twice-yearly full colour timetable-cum-marketing guide, since 1987. Now in its 39th edition, this A4 size, 96-page publication allows comprehensive information to be included as well as for the individual timetables to be spaced out for superb clarity.

Marketing officer Mike Cheesman has been the editor since the first edition. He does the complete job of preparing *Bus Times* on his computer, except for the detailed maps, which London-based FWT designs, before having it printed locally. Early editions were produced by a local design agency; the move to producing it in-house led to considerable savings.

Operators such as Stagecoach, Compass Travel, Arriva and Metrobus each contribute for the inclusion of their services. The first edition contained just B&H timetables with a separate *Bus Times Extra*, part funded by the council, containing details of other operators' services. Edition four was the first to contain full timetables for each operator as well as tendered services, which are paid for by the relevant authority regardless of operator. However, National Express no longer advertises its express coach services in the guide.

Mike Cheesman says: 'We now produce 90,000 copies of each edition; originally only 10,000 were produced. We also do a *Pocket Bus Times & Map* which goes to language schools and tourist outlets of which we do 70,000 copies; this seems to cater well for the visitors who don't need the large book.'

Bus on the beach

The front cover has carried an artistic colour photograph by Roger Bamber since edition 30. The summer 2006 edition shows what looks like a B&H Trident caught out by the incoming tide, but is in fact a shot of a model bus taken looking into low sunlight.

Bus Times has a friendly feel about it. For example, the company's contact details inside the cover are entitled 'We would love to hear from you'. The rear cover proclaims that 37million bus journeys were made in Brighton during 2005 and thanks the passengers who made them. A foreword from Mike Cheesman accompanies a relevant topical photo.

Edition 38 coincided with B&H taking over Stagecoach's buses to Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells, so the picture showed him sticking a Brighton & Hove fleetname over Stagecoach's on the front of Stagecoach Trident 17069 loading passengers.

A listing of service changes since the previous edition is included, a feature I find useful. There is a contents listing, an alphabetical 'Which bus serves where?' and numerical 'Which Service? What Page?' completing the comprehensive index section. Maps show where to catch your bus at six key locations in the city, while the excellent foldout FWT maps in the centre pages include bus stops locations and names. Comprehensive fares information includes details of integrated bus and train tickets available from B&H drivers to such far-flung places as Southampton, Bedford or Ashford (Kent) for just £12.50.

Other useful information

Other features include information about low-floor buses, real time information, places to visit, job opportunities, company travel shops, local rail services, the role of Brighton & Hove City Council and holiday service levels. In the 'What's on around the city' diary, the company warns of those events likely to cause severe traffic delays. There is also a 'Help us to help you' section as well as facts about the company's website www.buses.co.uk and private hire business.

The timetables are first-rate, each featuring a bold route header, large service number, helpful route map and symbols to indicate whether wheelchairs and buggies may be carried. Any restrictions on the use of Saver tickets are clearly identified and timetable variations are shaded in colour to highlight them, with notes at the bottom of each page.

Bus Times intends to stick to the 12hr format, with either a shaded orange 'am' or purple shaded 'pm' code above every journey. Mike Cheesman explains: 'We have done surveys from time to time and none of them has ever proved people want it one way or the other...all television listings are also in the 12hr clock.'

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (tell us about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Leven address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to buseseditor@btconnect.com

London's Transport Museum

Shop at the London's Transport Museum store for EFE, Corgi, Britbus, Creative Master Northcord and Sunstar die-cast models, including special editions exclusive to the Museum.

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Unit 26, Covent Garden Market
Store open daily 10.00 - 18.00
Or shop online at www.ltmuseum.co.uk

London's Transport Museum is closed for refurbishment until summer 2007

MAYOR OF LONDON
Transport for London

English and Welsh reports (no photographs) should be sent to: **John G. Lidstone, 15 Beach Court, Rampart Street, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9AF,** marking your envelope **'Fleet News'**) E-mail text messages (no attachments or photographs, please) to: **fleetnews@lineone.net.**

IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva North West retires last Lynxes**
- **Primo midibus for Countryliner**
- **Harris of Grays rides again**
- **Stagecoach withdraws Yorkshire Spartans**
- **Thornes restores Beadle-Leyland**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

A2B Travel, Prenton, Wirral

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah C33F YN06 CYC is new, Iveco EuroRider/Beulas C50Ft W811 AAY is acquired ex-Neild, Thrapston and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton L31 ORC has been sold.

ACE Travel, Aintree

Recent acquisitions are Volvo B6/Alexander Dash M343 NOD and Dennis Dart/Carlyle H243 MUK. AEC Routemaster RML897 is registered 254 UXO (*WLT 897*).

MCW Metrobus G106 FJW was repainted white with red cross of St George to support the England football team in the World Cup championship.

Marshall Minibuses P853 UCA and R107 VLX have gone to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer) and Dennis Dominator/East Lancs E138 SAT has been traced to Cotton, Bickerstaffe. The remains of former Crosville Leyland Olympian/ECW C208 GTU have been removed, as have Metrobus A725 THV and Dennis Dominator/East Lancs CLV 41X, the latter to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Ex-Nottingham City Transport Dennis Arrows N401-3 ARA and ex-Derby Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties MTV 313W have been repainted in fleet livery, while Fleetline/ECW ULS 658T has been repainted in its original Midland Scottish blue/cream livery, in place of red and cream.

Alpine, Llandudno

Open-top Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties CFM 87S has been repainted in City Sightseeing red. Open-top Leyland Atlantean VTD 720T, Bedford YMT/Wadham Stringer TKM 109X and Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW BPT 927S have been sold for scrap, and similar YMB 503W was scrapped on site.

Six Gardner 6LXB engines from Leyland Titans have been acquired for fitting in Leyland Olympians, including B155 TRN.

Alton Towers Transport

New express services for Alton Towers theme park customers run from Leek (X10), Uttoxeter (X30) and Stoke (X65), operated by three new Optares — Solo M920 MX06 ACY with Alton Towers Transport fleetnames, and plain white Tempo X1200s MX06 ACU, ADV.

Ambassador, Great Yarmouth

New is Autosan Eagle C67F school coach BX06 HZR.

Amos, Eydon, Northants

All-Leyland Olympian F845 ENV, illustrated in November 2005 Fleet News, is ex-Isle of Man Transport 88 (BMN 88G).

Arriva Cymru AA

Mercedes-Benz Varios 301-5/10/41/54/7 (R801-5/10 YJC, R341 KGG, R124 TKO, R487 UCC) are stored at Caego depot, Wrexham, while 316/21 (R816/21 YJC) have been sold to Dunn Line, Nottingham. Ex-London Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 1101/5 (L941/35 GYL) have been withdrawn.

Arriva London AA

DAF DB250/Alexander ALX400 DLA69-71 (S269-71 JUA) have been transferred to Arriva North West.

Arriva Midlands AA

The first VDL DB250/Wright Pulsar Gemini reported at Leicester is 4746 (FJ06 ZTO). Ex-Stevensons' DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 4001/2 (L94/5 HRF) have been renumbered 4698/9.

Ex-Arriva North West Volvo B6s L239/40/3 TKA have been numbered 2107-9, while a third Leyland Olympian from this source is Northern Counties H45/30F-bodied 4505 (F255 YTJ). Olympian/ECW 4501 (A501 EJF) has been sold; as Midland Fox's first Olympian it was hoped it would go for preservation.

Arriva North East AA

Further fleetnumbers for ex-Arriva Southern Counties DAF DB250/Northern Counties H43/24D are 7447/8/52 (R204/5/9 CKO); 7448/51 (R204/8 CKO) entered service in London red, but have since been repainted aquamarine, but remain dual-door.

Leyland Olympian/ECW H42/26D 7224/7 (D146 FYM, C59 CHM) have been repainted and converted to H42/26F; 7224 is at Bishop Auckland, 7227 at Blyth, pending a decision on the future of fire damaged for Scania N113/Northern Counties 7256 (N181 OYH). Former London Leyland Olympian/Alexander H43/25D 7277/8 (J353/4 BSH) have been rebuilt to H43/25F, with 7278 also repainted aquamarine.

Left: Although converted to single-door layout and repainted in corporate aquamarine and stone, Arriva North East 7278 (J354 BSH) retains its London destination blinds and consequently displays only minimal information. This was one of 40 Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians, with Cummins LT10 engines, delivered to Leaside Buses in 1992 when it was a London Buses subsidiary. DAVID LONGBOTTOM

Northumbria Optare MetroRider 2703 (R703 MHN), DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4014-8/96 (K414-7 BHN, L418 FHN, G257 UVK) and SB220/Ikarus 4089 (J930 CYL) have gone into reserve, while Scania L113/East Lancs 274/6 (P274/6 VRG) are out of use at Ashington.

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers 1642/3 (S642/3 KHN) were transferred to Arriva Scotland West in April, Optare MetroRiders 921, 2621 (R921 JNL, P621 FHN) returning in exchange and allocated to Bishop Auckland and Redcar respectively; 921 officially never left (recorded as 'under repair'). Leyland Lynx 2s 5012/3 (J652/3 UHN) went to Scotland West on loan from June.

Arriva North West AA

DAF DB250/Alexander ALX400 H45/17D 4020-2 (S269-71 JUA) have been transferred from Arriva London. Another new VDL SB200/Wright Commander B44F is 2600 (CX06 BKE).

The last Leyland Lynxes, 1743/52/4 (G49 CVC, H254 PAJ, J654 UHN) at Winsford, were withdrawn on 29 April, with 1752 operating a return journey on service 84 (Crewe-Chester) on the last day. The ex-Blue Bus Dennis Lance/Alexander PS-types based at Manchester, 1921-4/6-8/32/3 (J101-4/6-8/12/3 WSC) new to Selkent, have been withdrawn. The remaining Lances are at Bolton, and it is thought that no buses remain in Blue Bus livery.

Also withdrawn are Optare MetroRiders 76-9 (R226-9 SCH), Mercedes-Benz 711D 148 (P658 KEY), 709D 164/5 (P524/5 UGA), Varios 301/4 (R801/4 YJC), Volvo B6s 7225/31 (L225/31 TKA), Volvo Citybuses 3671/2/92/7 (H113/5 ABV, H662/7 GPF) and Volvo B58 trainer 8168 (124 YTW *DEN 247W*).

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 3255 (F255 YTJ) has been transferred to Arriva Midlands, while 3214/9 (G754/9 UYT) have gone to Johnson, Hodthorpe, and Ensign (Dealer), Purfleet has sold ECW-bodied 3041 (A141 MRN) to Country Hopper, Ibstock. On return from rail replacement work at Green Lane, Dennis Dominators 3832/5/6 (G802 THA, H805/6 AHA) were sold to Ensign along with Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type 3221 (G521 WJF).

Arriva Southend AA

New at Grays for London Buses route 498 (Romford-Brentwood) are VDL SB120/Wright Cadet B28D 3971-3 (YE06 HPX-Z).

Arriva Southern Counties AA

East Sussex County Council Optare Solo SlimLine M850SL/B25F B460/2 (YJ05 WCG, YK05 CDV) are operating here in County Rider dark blue.

Another DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine II sent to Arriva North East is 6209 (R209 CKO). Although 6210-2 (R210-2 CKO) are still expected there, they remain at Tunbridge Wells.

Optare MetroRiders 1450/1, 1805/51 (M450/1 HPF, N805 BKN, L800 BUS) have been sold to Erith Commercials (dealer), along with Mercedes-Benz Varios 1180, E2380 (R950/9 VPU), Leyland Lynx 3051 (H814 EKJ) and the remains of MCW Metrobus M615 (KYO 615X) and fire-damaged DAF SB120/Wright Cadet 3936 (GK52 YVA). Lynxes 3046/52 (F46 ENF, H816 EKJ) have gone to Collier, Earith, Cambs, driver trainer Dennis Dart YDT463 (J463 MKL) to Autocar, Five Oak Green, and Darts 3169 (K469 SKO) and driver trainer YDT595 (L505 CPJ) to Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green (dealer). Volvo B6 3602 (L602 EKM) is with Arriva the Shires & Essex, after a spell with MK Metro.

New Enterprise

Dennis Javelin/UVG UniStar C55FL P100 LOW is on three months' loan from Arriva the Shires & Essex; it was new to Luckett, Watford. MCW Metrobus 5275 (B275 WUL) was reinstated briefly to replace Leyland Olympian 5899 (F899 DKK) after its return to main fleet stock, but has been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) along with Leyland Tiger 2194 (J25 UNY) and Metrobus 5275 (B275 WUL).

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

New VDL SB120/Wright Cadets for London Buses service 268 (Finchley Road-Golders Green) are 3704-10 (YJ06 LFE-H/K/L, LDK). Also new are Optare Solo SlimLines 2468-72 (YJ06 YRP/R-U) for the H1-3 Hampstead local services.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2136/51/8 (N916 ETM, N381/66 JGS) and former Sovereign 811D 2408 (M455 UUR) have been withdrawn.

The PSV Circle reports the delivery to **MK Metro** in April of Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F 83-8 (YN06 JXJ-M/O/P), in orange/dark blue Route 5 livery.

Above: Two of Arriva North West's recent delivery of Wright Commander-bodied VDL SB200s have four fewer seats and are painted in Airlink livery to operate alongside Scania OmniCitys on the service between Liverpool city centre and John Lennon Airport. This is 2602 (CX06 BKG). LES LONG

Arriva Yorkshire AA

Fourteen new VDL DB250/East Lancs double-deckers in aquamarine and stone 'cow's horns' Connecting Kirklees livery at Dewsbury for services 202/203 (Leeds-Dewsbury-Huddersfield) are 1600-13 (YJ06 WLX/Z, WMA/C-G/K/L/V/X-Z). They will displace the DB250/Optare Spectras to Belle Isle, where they will oust the few remaining ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians.

Latest withdrawals are of Dennis Dart/Carlyle Dartline 152 (H878 LOX) after its five-month reinstatement at Selby and all but two of the remaining Leyland Lynxes, with 358/61/3/5/76 (H358/93 WWY, J363/5 YWX, J376 AWT) out of service and just 344/79 (H344 UWX, J379 BWU) remaining at Castleford. Also retired are Leyland Olympian/ECW 564/99 (A564 NWX, B599 SWX), the last Optare MetroRiders, 749/56 (M749 WWR, N756 LWW), and the last Volvo Citybus, Northern Counties-bodied 765 (G622 BPH).

Lynx 382 (J382 BWU) and fire-damaged Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 426 (M426 UNW) have gone to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Ashall, Clayton, Manchester

Used on schools work is yellow 12.5m Alexander Dennis Enviro300/B62F MX55 XGM. Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer N657, 976 HTE went in part exchange.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Mellor coach SF03 SDV has passed to Shawburn, Coatbridge. The last ex-Stagecoach Dennis Dominator, B24 TVU, went to Parton (dealer), Barnsley for scrap. Ex-Manchester Leyland Olympians B138 WNB and B150 XNA remain in as-withdrawn condition, but B149 XNA was scrapped on site.

Avon, Moreton, Wirral

Dennis Lance SLF/Berkhof B37D M185/91/7 UAN have been converted to B41F.

B&J, Barnoldswick, Lancs

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah C33F SN03 FHD has been acquired from Wilson, Rhu, while Volvo B12M/Plaxton C53F SG03 ZEP (*KSK 980*) is ex-Park, Hamilton. Vario T87 RJL went to Plaxton, Anston (dealer) in part exchange.

Barratt, Nantwich

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander DP31F N7 BCL is an acquisition from Arriva Midlands in red/silver livery. In from WA Shearings are Volvo B10M/Van Hool MLZ 9698, J227 NNC.

Scania GO03 ECB has been sold and Leyland Tiger VIA 4511 is withdrawn, but still owned.

Battersby Silver Grey, Morecambe

The new Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panthers are numbered 937/8 (YN06 MXC/D). Iveco EuroRider/Plaxton PF02 VWO (*3182 NF*) and Scania L94/Irizar W975 BEC (*7121 RU*) have been sold to Plaxton, Anston (dealer); their cherished marks transferred to B12B/Plaxtons PJ03 NBK/L respectively.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre VE

Further Optare Solos are M920/B31D CN06 BXL/P, standard liveried B31F M920s, and M850 SlimLine/B27F CB06 BXE. Earlier Solos CE52 UXA-D have gone to Perryman, Berwick-upon-Tweed and CE52 UWZ, UXF to Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith.

Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk

The tri-axle ex-Hong Kong Citybus Leyland Olympian/Alexander H57/45F has been registered J645 CEV (*FC 7233*), and has been joined by M129 BNO (*GE 5021*), a Volvo Olympian/Alexander CH57/45F, also ex-Citybus. Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C53F NCZ 1912 (*K524 EHE*) is ex-Firth, Pontefract. Former Ipswich Optare MetroRider MR17/B29F M213 EDX, acquired for spares, lost its engine and seats within a day of arrival.

Extra work commitments have led to Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer L203 HYE being retained.

Belle Vue, Heaton Chapel

Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B29F MV54 EEO has been acquired from Bluebird, Middleton. Irisbus Scolabus 150E24/Vehixel B67FL FD54 ENE is in use on schools.

Berwyn, Trefor

Volvo B9M/Van Hool C38Ft N660 EWJ has been acquired from Eddie Brown Tours.

Birmingham Coach Company GA

Another Volvo Olympian from London General is Northern Counties Palatine II-bodied R363 LGH. People's Express Dennis Dart/Wright Crusader P829 BUD and Mercedes-Benz Vario/Alexander P113 HCH have been painted in Diamond Bus livery, but the company says no decision has yet been taken about future image.

Blackpool Transport

Leyland Atlanteans 350/1 (GHG 350W, UHG 351Y) have been withdrawn. 350 is earmarked for Blackpool Council's Operational Services Department and 351 lost its engine to 362. Still in stock are 352-64 (UHG 352-4Y, A355-62

continued overleaf...

Below: While Stagecoach has helped celebrate the Aldershot & District centenary by painting two buses in traditional A&D livery complete with scroll fleetnames, Arriva Southern Counties has applied the colours in the style of its modern livery on Guildford-based 3088 (P288 FPK), a Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF. GEOFF RIXON

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

VE Veolia

WG Wellglade Group

HHG, B363/4 URN), plus driver trainers 922/3 (URN 322/3V), which have lost their upper deck glazing, and are flush panelled.

Bluebird, Middleton
The second new Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart is OO06 BLU. MPD 18 (MV54 EEO) has been sold to Belle Vue, Heaton Chapel. Ex-Metroline MAN 11.220/Marshall N126 XEG has been re-registered 1 BLU and has become bus number 1.

Blue Triangle, Rainham
MCW Metrobus M801 (KYV 801X) has been withdrawn with a chassis defect.

Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith
The fleet of Optare Solos continues to grow with the arrival of CE52 UWZ, UXF from Bebb, Llantwit Fardre. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds P120/23 HCH were sold to a dealer after a relatively short stay.

Brighton & Hove GA
The two 12m Twin-Deck Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs private hire vehicles, 401/2 (YN06 NYK/L), are to **DPH49/35F** layout and carry Smarter Charter branding on standard livery.

Burnley & Pendle TD
The former Blazefield fleets now have Transdev prefixes and are listed under Transdev.

Caelloi, Pwllheli
Former Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ05 JWZ has been acquired, along with Volvo B12M/Berkhof Axial coach FN03 DXM.

Calne Travel, Calne, Wilts
The unique Iveco TurboCity 480.10.21/Alexander RH-type double-decker previously with Abus, Bristol, J80 BUS, is here but has been damaged and may be sold.

Cardiff Bus
Further to last month, articulated Scania OmniCity CN94UA/AB53D 613-7 (CN06 GFJ/K/O, GDV/Z) are in Capital City Red livery, while 618/9 (CN06 GDX/Y) are in a new Best Impressions version of the petrol blue/cream fleet livery, for use on any of the three artic bus routes.

Withdrawn are Optare MetroRiders 108/14 (M108 JHB, M114 KBO) and Volvo Ailsa B55-10 MkIII/Northern Counties 402 (NDW 402X).

Carousel, High Wycombe
The third Irisbus Agora Line/B44F is C3 WYC.

Carter, Ipswich
Former Transdev Yellow Buses Dennis Lance/East Lancs EL2000 B48F L405 BFX has been acquired via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

Above: Cardiff Bus has painted the final two of its 19 new Scania OmniCity articulated buses in this new generic livery, which essentially is the Capital City Red livery with cream rather than red and orange relief. Here, 619 (CN06 GDY) operates on the BayCar service, a contract taken over from Bebb Travel. ALAN MILLAR

Above: The first of the Plaxton Centro-bodied VDL SB120s for Centrebus's commercial operations in the Home Counties, FH06 KGK, posed before entering service. The operator assures us that its destinations will be more informative than the word 'Service' beloved of Eastern Counties in National Bus Company days. SIMON AYRES

Cavalier, Sutton Bridge
Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 5321 (K917 FVC) has been withdrawn.

Cedric, Wivenhoe, Essex
Leyland Olympian ACM 710X has been sold to Flagfinders, Braintree.

Centrebus
New for the Luton area operation is FH06 KGK, a 10.8m VDL SB120/Plaxton Centro B40F. Three similar vehicles were expected for re-launch of commercial service 10 on 8 July.

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne
Another ex-Ulsterbus Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus DP39F from Wealden PSV (dealer), Five Oak Green, is CAZ 6619. Mercedes-Benz Vario 811D/Alexander Sprint B31F N469/71 EHA are here from Stafford Bus Centre (dealer).

Chelmsford Taxibus
The Ford Transit remains ever popular here, with new short wheelbase EX06 CEA/F/J in stock.

Classic, Annfield Plain TGM
Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart 7855 (LX55 KZZ) has gone to Network Colchester.

Clynnog & Trevor, Trefor
Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton M528 KTG has been re-registered 151 WYB, transferred from Volvo B10M/Plaxton RME 974Y.

Coach Services, Thetford
AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H40/32R JJD 401D has appeared here.

Country Hopper, Ibstock, Leics
Another Leyland Olympian/ECW is ex-Arriva North West H45/32F A141 MRN.

Countryliner, Guildford
New here is Plaxton Primo B28F KX06 LYP.

Courtesy, Chadderton
Volvo B10M-50/Alexander H47/37F YCZ 4811 (*G103 PES*) has passed to Style, Peterlee.

Below: Sadly damaged Iveco TurboCity double-decker J80 BUS on the premises of Calne Travel. This unique vehicle, its Alexander RH-type body distinguished by Italian citybus windscreens, was launched at the 1991 Coach & Bus show and has been owned by a succession of operators, mostly in south-west England. DANIEL STAZICKER

Courtney, Bracknell
The two East Lancs Esteem-bodied Alexander Dennis Enviro300s arrived un-registered in June. An East Lancs-bodied double-decker, RX06 WRU, is also reported but with no further details.

De Courcey, Coventry
Two more MAN 14.220/MCV Evolutions, equipped with air conditioning and painted green/cream for the Coventry South park-&-ride service, include 554 (AE06 OPJ). Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall R772 LHP, S45/6 BVC have been sold to Eastbourne Buses.

Dereham Coachways, Norfolk
Recently acquired is W6 AMS, a Volvo B10M-62/Van-Hool Alizée T9 C49Ft new to Aberfeldy Motor Services.

Docklands Minibuses, London E16
LOTS reports that the last of the eight Dennis Dart/MCV Evolution B29D is AE06 HCG, and another batch, believed to be eight, is due for the W19 (Ilford-Walthamstow, Argall Avenue Industrial Estate) in November. Following their arrival, Stagecoach London Dart 34304 (LX51 FGF) has gone back.

Don's, Dunmow, Essex
Former Hong Kong Citybus tri-axle Leyland Olympian/Alexander H57/45F J546 CEV (*FC 8104*) has been acquired.

Dreadnought, Alnwick
Now 49 years old, immaculate former Crosville Bristol Lodekka LD6G/ECW open-topper 1 (833 AFM) is still operating guided tours of Alnwick. It has a Gardner 6LXB engine rather than the 6LW all LD6Gs had when new. It still carries Crosville fleetnumber DLG876.

Former Trimdon Motor Services/United Leyland Leopard 5 (TBR 527V) and ex-London Leyland Titan 6 (KYN 306X), latterly with Blackburn Transport, operate park-&-ride facilities for Alnwick Garden, while open-top ex-London Leyland Fleetline/Park Royal 4 (THX 291S) provides the Northumbrian Coastal Clipper service.

DRM, Bromyard
As reported on p10, this Hereford operator is to buy Scania's OmniLink CK230UB/B44F demonstrator after it completes its sales programme.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham VE
Further to last month new National Express-liveried Volvo B12Bs 0602-5 (FJ06 GHA/B/D/F) have Caetano Enigma bodies.

Eastbourne Buses
Further to last month's report, three ex-De Courcey, Coventry Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B43F were purchased in May, 32-4 (R772 LHP, S45/6 BVC).

Travel De Courcey 554 (AE06 OPJ), one of the two MCV Evolution-bodied MAN 14.220s — with roof-mounted Carrier air conditioning units — operated on the Coventry South park-&-ride contract held previously by Travel West Midlands. BEN MORROLL

East Thames Buses
The Volvo B7TL/Plaxton Presidents on loan from London General are numbered VP21-31 (X699, 504/98, 702/5, 503/97/6/02/01/95 EGK).

East Yorkshire EY
The first of six Plaxton Primos for Bridlington are 496/7 (YX06 HVJ/K).

Dennis Tridents 660/1 (546, 46 EYB) are being transferred to Finglands after repaint and have been re-registered X585/4 XKH respectively, their registrations transferring, respectively, to former Finglands Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type driver trainers 9911/10 (M421/20 RRN), while 9912 (M422 RRN) has become 665 EYL.

Leyland Tiger 82 (TJI 8782 *A312 BDL*) and ex-London MkII MCW Metrobuses 638/40 (E473/6 SON) have been sold. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 146 (E52 WAG) is on loan to Whittle.

Eazibus, Birkenhead
New Optare Solo SlimLine M850 MX06 ACJ is for Heswall local services 174/175, won recently from First.

Ebley Coaches, Ebley, Glos
The Village Link group of services was won when Beaumont Travel ceased. Rohill-bodied Renault Masters X92 AHU and Y892/3 HAE came with the work.

Ensignbus, Purfleet EB
AEC Routemaster RCL2226 (CUV 226C) came from Aeroshoot Film Services, and is to be restored as a Green Line coach for the heritage fleet, which already has RCL2220 (CUV 220C), an ex-London Coaches convertible open-topper.

Former DMS-class Daimler Fleetline KJD 2P, latterly with Cherry Tree Garage in Cornwall, and MCW Metrobus BOK 5V have been sold for preservation.

Excel, Stansted
New is tri-axle Ayats Bravo WX06 OSW. ECW-Leyland Olympians C122 CHM and D126 FYM are in use, in blue/white livery.

Expressway, Wath-upon-Dearne, S Yorks
Allover white Iveco Daily/Marshall L865 BEA is operating Service E28.

Fargo, Rayne, Essex
On loan here are Leyland Olympian/East Lancs H50/35F KTL 43Y from Excel, Stansted and Olympian/ECW H45/32F B248 NVN from Stephenson, Rochford.

Finglands, Rusholme EY
The two new Volvo coaches are B12B/Plaxton C49Ft 376/7 (YN55 WTO/P). Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H45/29F 660/1 (X585/4 XKH, *546, 46 EYB*) have been transferred from East Yorkshire.

First Berkshire FG
The outstanding Dennis Dart/East Lancs Myllennium B39F for the Surrey County Council Pegasus project are 43919-21 (LK06 BWB-D), at Bracknell. BMC 1100FE schoolbus 68512 (RX54 AOY) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

First Bristol FG
The first of 20 Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B37F are 42952-4/60-6 (WX06 OMJ-L/T-W/Y/Z, ONA), of which 46949-61 are/will be in Rail Link livery for Bristol circular services 8/9.

Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 41192 (R192 VLD) has been transferred to First Cymru. Leyland Lynx driver trainer 62501 (F401 LTW) has been sold to Munden, Bristol.

First Coaches FG
Volvo B12B 23208 (WM04 NZU) has passed to First Devon & Cornwall.

First Cymru FG
Former London Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B33F 41192 (R192 VLD) is due from First Bristol. Dennis Javelin GX/Plaxton Expressliner 21152 (T102 XDE) has been withdrawn.

First Devon & Cornwall FG
Further Dennis Trident/Plaxton Presidents transferred to Plymouth from First London are 32802/3/8/12/7/9/46 (T802 LLC etc). Another arrival from First Coaches is Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C49Ft 23208 (WM04 NZU).

Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusaders 40448/80-6, 48141/2 (M918 MRW, N443/5-9/41/2 BKY) are due to return to First South Yorkshire.

The PSV Circle reports the disposal of Bristol VRTs 38701 (AFJ 701T) and 38846 (LFJ 846W), Dennis Dart SLFs 41154/61 (P154 NLW, R161 TLM), Dennis Dart 46102 (K902 CVW), 46414-7/51 (M414-7, 501 CCV),

continued overleaf...

Below: One of two ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympians with Alexander (Belfast) RH-type bodies added to the Eastbourne Buses fleet, 255 (J644 CEV) was numbered RH118 by its original owner. CHRIS MARTIN

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
VE Veolia
WG Wellglade Group

Left: Although not numerically the first of the batch, First Bristol Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart 42952 (WX06 OMJ) carries a commemorative ribbon vinyl to draw attention to the group's latest investment in the city's bus fleet. First has come in for some heavy criticism in Bristol over fares and service standards. CHRIS MARTIN

Above: Still to have banana logos applied, First Eastern Counties 29623 (NML 623E) — *Fruitmaster* **RML2623 — was in Flying Banana colours in time for the special service being operated to the Royal Norfolk Show at the end of June. Unfortunately, mechanical problems prevented it from being used, although it should help operate the company's weekday heritage seaside services in Great Yarmouth and Cromer in August. GRAHAME BESSEY**

47069 (M809 FTT), Mercedes-Benz 811D 50832 (K332 OAF), Mercedes Varios 52593/5 (R413/5 VPU) and 52651 (R851 YDV). Dennis Lances 60998, 61001/3 (N460/3/5 JUG) and Volvo B10M-55 buses 66555/7 (G455/7 JYG).

First Eastern Counties FG

Transferred here are First Potteries Dennis Dart/Plaxton B36F 40113/4 (M953/2 XVT) and First Manchester Dart/Northern Counties B39F 40185/7, 40251/6/7/9 (M608/12 SBA, N619/24/5/7 CDB).

The 'historic' livery chosen for AEC Routemaster 39623 (NML 623E) — RML2623 — is the green/yellow of Flying Banana, the Great Yarmouth independent taken over in 1998. It has been named *Fruitmaster*. Although reported transferred from First Glasgow (Fleet News, April), short Routemaster 39859 (WLT 759) has still not appeared here.

Three-axle Leyland Olympian 30105 (K489 EUX) is in service at Norwich after refurbishment at Rotherham, while 30099, 30100 (K483/4 EUX) entered service at Great Yarmouth on 28 May.

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45418 (LDZ 9118) has been withdrawn, while 45321 (JDZ 2321), 45415/6/9/22 (LDZ 9115 etc) and Duple-bodied 46006/8 (G456/8 KNG) have gone to Erith Commercials for scrap.

First Essex FG

Chelmsford park-&-ride Scania L94UB/Wright Solar 65680-4 (YR52 VEK/L/P/U/Y) were *not* diverted from First Potteries; they are existing First Essex vehicles, which were branded for service 31 (Chelmsford-Maldon/Burnham) and are being used temporarily on park-&-ride until new Scania OmniCitys arrive. They were replaced temporarily on service 31 by borrowed Potteries L94UBs 65728-33 (YN05 HCP/U/V/X-Z).

The final passenger-licensed Mercedes-Benz 709D, 51780 (P680 HPU), remained active at Dovercourt through May. The former Braintree depot was demolished by mid-May; the new development on the site is to be called The Depot.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

In service are Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 43845-8 (SN55 CXH/F/J/E) and BMC 1100FE schoolbuses 68553/61/2 (HX05 BUJ, HX55 AOJ/H); BMC 68512 (RX54 AOY) is here from First Berkshire.

Older vehicles fitted unexpectedly with dot matrix front number displays are Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45384 (JDZ 2384) and Leyland Lynx 62641 (H641 YHT).

Withdrawn are Volvo B10Ms 20059/61/77 (GIL 1684, KDU 648, TJI 3137), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 51568/81 (M868 ATC, N881 HWS), 51646 (N46 OAE) and Iveco 59.12 52016 (K916 VDV).

First London FG

Dennis Tridents 32802/3/8/12/7/9/46 (T802 LLC etc) have gone to First Devon & Cornwall and Volvo Olympians 34201/6/9/11/21 (S201 LLO etc) to First South Yorkshire.

First Manchester FG

Delivery of the next batch of Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F has started with 69139-51/3/5/6/8-64/98 (MX06 VOP/T-Y, VPA, VNW-Z, VOA-D/G, VNL/M/O/P/R-V, VAV).

More Dennis Arrows/East Lancs Pyoneer H49/27D from First Somerset & Avon are 31925/32/9/48 (R425 SOY, R432/9/48 ULE) and Northern Counties H49/33F-bodied 30585 (P412 PLE) and H47/33F 31902/3/5/6 (P402 PLE etc) from First West Yorkshire.

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 40185/7, 40251/6/7/9 (M608/12 SBA, N619/24/5/7 CDB) have gone to First Eastern Counties. Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Alexander H47/37F 30353/5 (G412/1 OGD) were transferred to First Edinburgh in May.

The PSV Circle reports the withdrawal of Scania N113DRB/East Lancs 30255/6 (H813/4 WKH), Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 40237/8/40 (N391 EUG, N325 HUA, N208 WBA) and Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 60287 (G62 RND), and the sale of Volvo Citybus/Alexander 30385 (G533 RDS) to PVS (dealer), Carlton.

First Potteries FG

Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ55 BLX was used for two weeks on Chester service 1, then moved on to Ulsterbus before returning for a second stay.

Further contraction will see Newcastle-under-Lyme garage close in September, with remaining work transferred to Crewe and the sole remaining North Staffordshire garage at Adderley Green. Newcastle is the company's last pre-1986 Potteries garage. There once were garages at Hanley, Stoke, Longton, Burslem, Biddulph, Milton and Cheadle, and workshops in Stoke.

Seventy-nine buses in the reserve/disposal pool, some of them disused for over a year, are Leyland Olympians 30039/59/67/8/87/8 (GFM 104X, A161/9/70 VDM, D257/66 JVR), Scania N113DRBs 31078-80/2 (G801-3/5 JYG), Optare MetroRiders 40047/51/2/4-63 (M380 SRE, P384/5/7-90 MEH, R391-6 ERE), Dennis Darts 40069/75/7/81/2/4/94 (J902/8/10/4/5/7/27 XRF), 40098/9, 40101 (L932/3/5 HFA) 40103-5/7/9/13/4/7/22/7 (L937-9/41 LRF, M943/52 SRE, M953/6/61/9 XVT), Peugeot Boxer 50000 (M27 YRE), Iveco Daily 50019 (V117 DLH), Mercedes-Benz Varios 50024/6-32/4/6/9/41-4/59, (R234/6-42/4/6/9/51-4, S269 AFA), Mercedes 709Ds 50067/75/6 (N409 HVT, P418/9 NFA), DAF SB220s 60019/26/46/51 (G255 JYG, K527 RJX, H804/9 GRE), Volvo B10M-62 coaches 60030/1, 60130 (R343/6/4 GHS), Dennis Lances 60097-101 (N863-7 CEH) and Ikarus-bodied SB220s 62428/9/34 (N28/9, 34 FWU).

Dennis Dart/Plaxton 40113/4 (M952/3 XVT) have gone to First Eastern Counties.

First Somerset & Avon FG

More Dennis Arrow/East Lancs Pyoneers sent to First Manchester are 31925/32/9/48 (R425 SOY, R432/9/48 ULE), while 10108 (V608 GGB) is another Volvo B7LA/Wright Eclipse Fusion AB55D transferred to First Glasgow, in April. Optare Solos 53038/9 (Y38/9 HBT) have been withdrawn, following withdrawal of services 672/674 (Bristol-Cheddar) on which they were used.

First South Yorkshire FG

New are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H45/29F 37146-54 (YN06 UPZ, URA-H) at Doncaster. Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 H49/29F 30871-6 (W726-9/71/31 DWX) have been transferred from First West Yorkshire, Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse B41F 60885-94 (YJ51 PZW-Y, RDZ, RHE/K, RGZ, RHF, RGY, REU) from First York and Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B44F 62234/7 (Y943/5 CSF) from First Edinburgh. Further Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H47/27D from First London are 34201/6/11/21 (S201 LLO etc).

Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusaders 40448/80-6, 48141/2 (M918 MRW, N443/5-9/41/2 BKY) are due to return from First Devon & Cornwall, to enable services 54 (Doncaster-Scawthorpe) and 63 (Doncaster-Bentley) to be converted to low-floor.

As reported in News last month and this, a final Dennis Dominator running day was held on 25 June on service 82. Dominators withdrawn are 30483/5/90/1/6/9 (C872/4/80/1/7 JWE, D471 OWE), 30511/6 (D484/9 OWE); 30490/1 went for scrap to PVS, Carlton (dealer). Dominator 30516 (D488 OWE) has gone for preservation.

Volvo B10M/Alexander 60497 (H653 THL) has suffered severe accident damage, and 60481 (G636 NWA) has also been taken out of service. Volvo B6BLE 40496 (T459 JDT) is back in service at Doncaster.

First West Yorkshire FG

Delivery of another 42 new Volvo B7TL/Wright Gemini H45/29F is under way for Bradford and Leeds Kirkstall. First delivered are 37021-50 (YJ06 XKK-P/S-Z, XLA-H/T-

Z, XMA), leaving 37051-62 expected. A further batch is then due as 32692-7 (YJ06 XLK-P) for Leeds.

Further Metro-owned BMC Condor 220/B57F schoolbuses prepared for use are 68642 (YK06 ATO) at Halifax, and 68643-7 (YK06 CZZ/Y, FHC, DAA/O) at Bradford. Others delivered have been new to various locations, but remain delicensed.

Optare Solo YK55 ENJ, the spare bus for the Leeds city free bus service, has returned to the manufacturer.

New for the Access unit at Bramley is low-floor Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 616CDi/Mellor B15F 54100 (PN06 FJF), while the unit has withdrawn Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 50183 (N116 DWE) and 711D/Leicester Carriage Builders 50400 (N473 RNR). Mercedes 614D W479 EUB remains on loan from Leeds City Council, but X407 WYG has been returned. Sprinter 413CDi KE03 JXU also remains on loan from Morrow, Rotherham (dealer).

The future of Halifax-based Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 60817 (S674 SVU) is in doubt following serious fire damage in March.

Dennis Arrows 30585 (P412 PLE), 31902/3/5/6 (P402 PLE etc) have been transferred to First Manchester; 31905/6 were the last in this fleet. Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royales 30826/7 (R646/7 HYG) have gone to First Edinburgh, Volvo B7TLs 30871-6 (W726-9/71/31 DWX) to First South Yorkshire.

Withdrawn are Leyland Olympians 30528 (A116 KUM), 30603/4/16/28/49 (CUB 52/3Y, A99, 121 KUM, B504 RWY), 30766/70 (C508 KBT, D512 HUB), yellow schoolbus Dennis Dart 40089 (K922 XRF) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50246-8/53/4 (M217/9/20/51/2 VWU). Olympian 30606 (CUB 55Y) was re-registered JWR 175Y before sale to PVS (dealer), Carlton along with 30616/49, 30770 and Leyland Lynx driver trainer 61236 (F102 GRM), Erith Commercials (dealer) has Mercedes 709Ds 50244/50/1 (M210/40/1 VWU).

First Wyvern FG

MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution AE06 OPG has been evaluated at Worcester and Kidderminster as a possible park-&-ride replacement for Dennis Darts, numbered 2505.

Withdrawn are Dennis Javelin/Duple 21083 (8683 LJ, *E474 FWV*), Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 22003/6 (B103/6 JAB) and Volvo B10M-55/Duple 66612 (G112 ENV).

First York FG

After periods of extended loan to Lothian Buses, Volvo B7LA/Hispano Habit AB48T demonstrator FJ53 LZX was noted here on 13 May, running alongside StreetCars on route 4 and displaying the minimal destination display of 'ftr'.

Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse 60911 (YG02 DLO) has been repainted in the same Park-&-Ride livery as 60913-22/7 and B7LAs 10035-43, with 60912 (YG02 DLD) due to follow.

The Volvo B7Ls displaced by the 'ftr' StreetCars, 60885-94 (YJ51 PZW-Y, RHE/K, RGZ, RHF, RGY, REU, RFE), have gone to First South Yorkshire, while Leyland Olympian/ECW 30682 (A601 NYG) has been withdrawn.

Fishwick, Leyland

Two new Plaxton Centro-bodied VDL single-deckers are due, in a revised livery to commemorate this respected operator's centenary. DAF SB4000/Van Hool YJ04 BYF has been sold to Stainton, Kendal.

Flagfinders, Braintree

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 GGM 104W has been scrapped.

Focus, Much Hoole, Lancs

Volvo B10M-50 Citybus/Alexander H46/33F G154 TYT is here from Arriva Scotland West, B10M-61/Van Hool IJZ 5934 (*KSK 978*) from Reay, Wigton.

Four Square, Kinsley, W Yorks

Scania K-series/Irizar SK03 OZL, new to Edinburgh Coach Lines, has been acquired.

Fraser, Holmeswood, Lancs

Leyland Olympian CWR 526Y has been re-registered LKZ 7691.

Geldard, Leeds

Former Metroline Volvo Olympian/Alexander H43/25D P478 MBY is now H47/32F.

Gemini, Ipswich

New is BMC Probus coach AE55 VPN.

REGISTRATIONNOTES

DAVID STANIER reports on some recent issues in Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, while KEITH ANDREWS explains how one preservation group went about reclaiming the lapsed original registration on a Leyland Olympic

Northern Ireland issues have moved into RKZ (Ballymena), HEZ and IEZ (Belfast) and DIG (Enniskillen). The Enniskillen series followed on from BIG, so missing the CIG combination, and with the series already more than half used, there seems to be some increase in rate of issue at this office.

Isle of Man issues had reached HMN-H earlier in the year and may well have progressed through further suffixes by the time this appears in print. *DJS*

What do you do if you acquire an old bus for preservation, find it has been re-registered and want to reunite it with its original mark? That was the situation facing Friends of King Alfred Buses, which is steadily progressing with the restoration of its 1950 Leyland Olympic. It has managed to recover its original registration, JAA 708, which was lost when the bus was exported to Ireland and reregistered BIC 671.

FoKAB had no chassis plate or old logbook or tax disc to convince the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency that its vehicle once had that registration. It just had some photographs, documents including an Irish logbook and the export certificate for its return to UK, references in books and a Metro-Cammell Weymann body plate stamped '*L19 WEYMANNS*', which the PSV Circle's *Preserved Buses* book said was JAA 708's number.

The Irish logbook showed BIC 671 had chassis 502362, but there was no independent evidence to link BIC 671 or that chassis with JAA 708. Luckily, Hampshire County Records Office had kept the vehicle registration mark allocation ledgers for August 1950, which had the important entry '*JAA 708 – Leyland 502362 – Chisnell & Sons, Winchester*'.

An evidence file was constructed including the book references and various photos with explanatory notes, showing the bus in service with King Alfred and its shipment from Ireland to Hampshire in 1990; including features identifying them as all the same vehicle.

The DVLA's expert, John Bedford of London Bus Preservation Trust, reviewed the evidence file and saw the vehicle itself. Despite currently having no body panels, he was persuaded that it was the genuine vehicle, so the application was submitted to DVLA. It sent a V55/5 form to complete with many questions that were difficult to answer — 1950s vehicles not having Certificates of Compliance or emissions details. A few questions that could be answered included the dimensions (in millimetres) and the power (in kiloWatts — 93).

Finally the hoped-for V5C Registration Certificate for JAA 708 arrived. All FoKAB has to do now is to continue the restoration and get the vehicle back on the road. If you wish to contribute to the costs, visit the FoKAB website **www.fokab.org.uk**.

KA

Go Goodwin, Eccles

Former Nottingham City Transport Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders M601/2 UTV have been re-registered 2809 PP and GUI 441 (not necessarily in that order). Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C49Ft JBT 3S (*R414 YWJ*) has been acquired from Johnson, Hodthorpe.

Scania/Berkhof WSV 551 (*M208 PAN*), sold to Crooke & Savery, Swarcliffe, has reverted to its original registration, while Volvo B10M/Berkhof GUI 441 (*P754 WOS, P879 FMO, P10 GEF, P879 FMO*) has become C1 ECB

Go North East GA

More secondhand acquisitions are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 8290-2 (S726 KNV, S783 RNE, T438 EBD).

Withdrawn are Optare MetroRider staff shuttles 401/11 (L471 YVK, N411 NTN) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 8090-2, 8111/2 (M890-2 GBB, M811/2 HCU).

Leyland National 2 driver trainer 4681 (UPT 681V) has been sold for preservation. MetroRider staff shuttle 390 (L390 AVK) has been sold for further service with Jaycrest, Sittingbourne, while Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer) has taken Leyland Olympians 3665/72/3 (C665/72/3 LJR), MetroRiders 414/26 (P414/26 VRG) and DAF SB220LC/Optare Delta 4741 (G741 RTY). Ensign has sold Olympians 3665/72 (C665/72 LJR) to Johnson, Hodthorpe, MetroRiders 422/6 to SE Coachworks, Faversham, and Mann, Gravesend respectively, and SB220/Deltas 4741/3/6 (G741/3/6 RTY) to McKindless, Wishaw.

Griffiths, Y Felinheli

A recent acquisition is Volvo B10M-55/Duple 300 B55F F707 WCS.

Hamilton, Uxbridge

New Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12Bs FJ06 GGX/Y/Z are at work.

Hand, Horsley

For the Rover Coaches fleet is Bova Magiq XHD122D340/C51Ft WA06 JGX.

Harris Coaches, Purfleet TGM

This new Tellings-Golden Miller subsidiary company — which almost recreates a famous name from the past — has three vehicles, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere T600 BCL and B12B/Jonckheere FN04 FSE/F, all in blue/green/white livery in TGM corporate style.

Harrogate & District TD

The Blazefield companies have gained Transdev prefixes, so this operator is now listed under Transdev Harrogate & District.

Hayton, Gorton

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B35F K709 KGU is here from Belle Vue, Heaton Chapel, Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool M633 KVU is another addition. DAF SB220/Ikarus N504 LUA has been numbered 21. Volvo B7R/Plaxton 8 (T448 UCH, *T8 PJC*) has been sold to Bellamy, Nottingham.

Henshaw, Moreton in Marsh

The first new coach here is Mercedes-Benz O815/Plaxton Cheetah C33F GL06 HET, while acquired from Lakeside, Ellesmere, Shropshire is Dennis Javelin/Plaxton C53F P153 FUJ.

Highway, Slough

This new operator has two Volvo B10Ms, Plaxton-bodied T505 EUB and Van Hool-bodied R426 EOS (*LSK 508*).

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

VE Veolia

WG Wellglade Group

Holmes, Clay Cross
Mercedes-Benz/Optare Solera C35F CC03 HOD has been acquired from Hodson, Ravenby for service 462 (Tansley-Highfields School, Starkholmes). It is in yellow schoolbus paintwork with kite-shaped vinyls.

Holmeswood, Rufford, Lancs
New are MAN 18.360/Marcopolo Viaggio 350 C49Ft PN06 KMA and Irisbus EuroRider C31/Marcopolo 330 C70F PN06 KSO.

Acquired are Scania K114/Irizar C49Ft CG53 CNG from C&G, Chatteris, K113CRB/Van Hool C53F R668 GTW from JMB, Carlisle and Scania L94IB/Van Hool C53Ft CNZ 3824 (*V33 CCH*) and Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool C55F XIL 3210 (*LUI 3210, G264 JSC, YSV 608, MBZ 8505, G22 MHG*) from Whitestar, Barrhead.

David Urquhart-liveried Volvo B12M/Jonckheere SO51 AAA was re-registered PG51 EDC, then JBV 529. MAN 18.310/Marcopolo V327 EAL and Dennis Javelin/Marcopolo W999 AMH have been re-registered with former Wallasey Leyland Atlantean marks JHF 825/6 respectively. Scania L94IB/Irizar Intercentury T745 JHE has been re-registered YSU 991, Scania K113/Van Hool R668 GTW is YTY 867 and Dennis Javelin/Neoplan M910 OVR (*270 BLU, M910 OVR, L8 TVL, M910 OVR*) is HBV 682.

Scania K113/Van Hool YTY 867, YSU 991, JHF 825 and DAF SB3000/Van Hool LUI 9691/2/4/5 have gone to Weavaway, Newbury; B10M/Plaxton G812/4 BPG have also been sold.

Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme
Leyland National Greenway VJI 6694 (*WPC 316X, 292 CLT, FCA 9X*) has been sold.

Isleworth Coaches
New Irisbus EuroRider/Beulas Aura AB06 BUS was entered in the UK Coach Rally in April.

Johnson, Hodthorpe, Notts
New are Scania K114/Irizar PBs YN06 CHD/O, while Ford Transit/Optare Bonito C16F YJ06 YRA was the vehicle exhibited (unregistered) at the UK Coach Rally in April.

Acquired are Scania K114/Irizar Century C49Ft YS02 XED from Mills, Gornalwood, while Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H45/30F G754/5/9 UYT are from Arriva North West.

Neoplan Euroliner YR02 UNZ has been re-registered P3 JBT, Volvo B12M YP52 KRV became M2 JBT, Volvo B10M YR52 MEV became M1 JBT and Neoplan Starliner YN04 AXA is JBT 3S. Volvo B10M-62 JBT 3S reverted to R414 YWJ before sale to Go-Goodwin, Eccles, while B10M M2 JBT has reverted to M324 KRY before sale to Rogers, Wrexham.

Jones, Llanfaethlu
Ex-Stagecoach Wales Mercedes-Benz 709D/UVG B27F N156 MTG is in stock.

W. E. Jones, Llanerchymedd
MCW Metrobus GYE 387W and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider G82 KUB have been withdrawn.

Keats, Sheffield
Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C50Ft B103/5 JAB have been acquired via Invincible Coach Sales and are in red and cream livery.

Keighley & District TD
The former Blazefield fleets now have Transdev prefixes and are listed under Transdev.

Kent Passenger Services, Aylesford
More VDL SB120/Wright Cadets are YJ06 LFA/X. Dennis Darts S775/6/8 RNE have gone.

Kettlewell, Retford
Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen V335 EAK has gone to Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk.

Kinsley, Stocksbridge, S Yorks
Ex-City of Oxford Leyland Olympian/ECW BBW 217Y is here from Charlton Services, Charlton-on-Otmoor. Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C50Ft B106 JAB has been acquired via Invincible Coach Sales in allover red. Van Hool Acron integral ACH 854Y has come from Elgar Coaches, Worcester.

Konectbus, Dereham
DAF SB220/Optare Delta J310 BVO has been sold to Speedwell, Glossop.

LA Coaches, Sale, Cheshire
Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool YSK 331 (*K473 VVR*) has gone to UK North, Gorton.

Ladyline, Key Green, Staffs
Dennis Dart J394 GKH has been withdrawn with fire damage.

Lakeland, Hurst Green, Lancs
Scania/Irizar PB YN06 CKU has arrived. DAF SB220/East Lancs Myllennium X685 REC has gone to TM Travel, Staveley.

Leon, Stafford
The new coaches are numbered as follows: Bova Magiq 160 (AT06 LCT), Scania/Berkhof Axial 161-5 (BT-FT06 LCT) and Scania/Irizar Century C49Ft 167/8 (GT/HT06 LCT).

By comparison, surprising acquisitions are Ford R1114/Duple Dominant MMJ 526V and VFD 224X from Pathfinder, Willenhall. The latter's body was new in 1981 and is fitted to the 1974 chassis of HEV 698N. Another acquisition is Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton C57F 93 (B393 OSB, *SIL 8494*).

Lewis-y-Llan, Amlwch
Leyland Fleetline XFU 128V and Optare StarRider H273 LJC have been sold for scrap.

Linburg Touring, Sheffield
Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2RH/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C53F A112 EPA is an acquisition. MAN/Van Hool USU 638 (*C434 RJR*) has been advertised for sale along with Volvo B10M/Plaxton BUI 471 (*G492 XEE*).

Lloyd, Bagillt
New Autosan Eagle/DP70F BX06 NZW/Y are in coach livery and schoolbus yellow respectively. Also new is Optare Solo SlimLine YJ06 FYM, in Deeside Shuttle livery.

Leyland Tiger JJZ 3488 has been reseated to DP70F. Leyland Olympian/Roe BPF 137Y has been re-registered HNZ 3909 and repainted yellow. ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians C114 CHM and D130 FYM have been sold to Phillips, Holywell.

Lloyd, Machynlleth
Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon LC06 WYN has been delivered.

Lodge, High Easter, Essex
New is Setra S415GHTD/C49Ft AL06 DGE. Acquisitions are Dennis Javelin/Plaxton C53F F459 NDV from Blunsdon, Bladon, Whitney and Setra S210H/C30Ft 743 RUR (*M412 MPD, WET 476*).

London General/London Central GA
Further Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B28D are LDP292-4 (LX06 EZZ/J/K). Darts withdrawn are LDP15, 34, 58, 78, 88 (P515 RYM, P734 RYL, R458/78/88 LGH) while Volvo Olympian NV163 (R363 LGH) has gone to Birmingham Coach Company.

Longstaff, Mirfield, W Yorks
New Volvo B12B/Van Hool coach JJL 945 is at work.

Lord, Hull
Wheelchair lift-equipped Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere M113 XWB and Bova Futura P688 AUG have been acquired from Gordon, Rotherham.

M&M, Accrington
Ex-Stagecoach South East Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B23F N202 LPN, N938 NAP are in stock.

Manchester Airport
Further Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B28F at work on car park shuttles are SN55 HSJ-L/O/U/V/X-Z, HTA/C-F.

Marshall, Leighton Buzzard
New Volvo/Plaxton coaches are B12B/Panthers YN06 OPV, PCV and B7R/Profiles YN06 OPR/W.

Marshall, Sutton on Trent, Notts
The new Optare Tempo B42F for service 39 (Newark-Tuxford) is OP72 (YJ06 YSP).

Metrobus GA
Nine further Dennis Dart/East Lancs are due in August and seven more Scania N94UD/East Lancs OmniDekkas in September.

All double-deckers at Crawley, and a large proportion of the single-deckers, are being repainted two-tone blue, with new seat covering. The programme is due for completion by the end of the year. The temporary depot at Polhill closed on 2 June and all vehicles returned to the rebuilt Orpington depot.

Metroline DG
Twelve more Alexander Dennis Enviro400s have been ordered for delivery from November, allocation still to be determined.

To assist with the increase in vehicle requirements following the take-up of Centra's 493 (Richmond-Tooting) contract, five Transdev London Dennis Darts were hired from 20 May (DPS4/5, 661/3/5: V904/5 KAG, LG02 FGJ/M/O) until Metroline Darts were became available after 10 June, following the loss of route 268 (Finchley Road-Golders Green) to Arriva the Shires & Essex.

Ensign (dealer), Purfleet has sold Volvo Olympian/Alexander RH-type AV19 (P479 MBY) to Scotguide, Glasgow.

Mountain Goat, Windermere
LDV Convoy M20 MGH is an acquisition, branded for service 598 (Windermere-Bowness circular), in place of Optare Aleros used in 2005.

National Car Parks
New contracts at Gatwick Airport employ MAN 14.220/MCV Evolutions AE55 VGK/L. At Heathrow, the assumption of airside operations previously undertaken by Menzies Aviation Services has seen the addition of Optare Excel L1150s T781-5/7/8 KNW and MAN 14.220/MCV Evolution AE05 CVA, but the Heathrow fleet is to be replaced in late-2006 with 10 Mercedes-Benz Citaros.

National Express NX
The first move towards a 100% wheelchair-accessible network by 2012 is the placing of orders for 73 Caetano Levantes, 29 on Volvo B12B and 44 on Scania K340EB.

Network Colchester SG
Transferred from Classic, Annfield Plain are Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B37F LK55 KZZ and Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano B40F 351 (HX51 LSN), while Optare Solo/B30F 227 (W427 CWX) has come from Tellings-Golden Miller, Byfleet.

For the second time in its career, all-Leyland Olympian/H43/29F 346 (F246 MTW) has returned to

The new Optare Tempo for Marshall's of Sutton on Trent, OP72 (YJ06 YSP). As explained in June 'Fleet in Focus', Marshall uses a fleetnumbering system developed from the one adopted by the much-loved Gash of Newark company. RUSSELL YOUNG

Colchester. In 1994, it migrated to Southend and received its short-lived yellow/red/blue/white double-deck coach livery, but returned here. Now, it's back from Burton, Haverhill. Transferred to Burton are DAF SB220/Ikarus 358/9 (J56 GCX, K124 TCP) and MCW Metrobus 804 (TVE 804, *C950 HWF*).

Leyland Lynx 351 (H251 GEV) has been sold as a non-PSV to Marlsworth, Tring, 352/3/6 (H252 GEV etc) to Wealden Omnibus, Five Oak Green (dealer), moving quickly on to O'S Coaches, Hospital, Co. Limerick, while Stephenson, Rochford (dealer) has stripped 357 (H257 GEV) for spares.

Newbury Minibuses, Hermitage

Acquired in June are Iveco EuroRider/Beulas FG03 JAU, JCU from Wootton, Chesham. The latter was re-registered K80 BLN. Bova A8 BHC, re-registered back to L384 RYC, went in part exchange to Plaxton, Anston (dealer) and Iveco/Beulas LV02 LLN has become A8 AHC.

Nip-On, St Helens

Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/B29F MX55 YBA is at work. Accident damaged Leyland Tiger/Duple A150 LFR is to be scrapped.

Norfolk Green, Kings Lynn

Another ex-Stagecoach South East Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B40F here is K578 NHC.

North West Coaches, Thornton

Optare Alero/B13F YP52 JWK is here from Travel for All, Clitheroe.

Nottingham City Transport

One of the latest delivery of new Scania N94UD OmniDekka/East Lancs double-deckers, registered YN06 TGX and in pink Go2 livery, was displayed at an East Lancs open day on 2 July.

Ogden, St Helens

Scania K93/Plaxton Premiere AHZ 7344 is one of two surviving ex-Stort Valley vehicles and has been repainted in the new metallic blue livery. The other is Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount MIL 1853, still blue/white.

Ex-Scenic Travel Mercedes-Benz O404/Hispano Vita S138 RWA has gone from store here.

Oxford Bus Company GA

Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ55 BLX was on loan in early- June, but not used in service.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 412 (P739 RYL) and Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde 612 (N612 FJO) are withdrawn. B10B/Verdes 603-5/7 (N603 FJO etc), due to be withdrawn, are retained to allow for extra journeys on the X3 to Abingdon following a dramatic rise in the number of passengers using service; apparently there are more people using it than used both it and the Stagecoach competing service, X4, which was withdrawn recently.

Paragon, Sheffield

Leyland Olympian/ECW SHE 610Y has been acquired from GHA, Corwen. One-time Premier, Stainforth Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Bustler OWG 368X did not last long in service.

Patron, Flintham, Notts

Former Hong Kong tri-axle MCW Metrobus RJT 671 has been sold, its cherished mark transferred to a new Volvo B7R/Jonckheere Modulo.

Phillips, Holywell

Former Arriva London Leyland Olympian/ECW C114 CHM and D130 FYM are acquisitions from Lloyd, Bagillt.

Prospect, Lye, W Midlands

This operator celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and has two new Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile C70FL, PR06 BET, PET, with 3+2 seats, some of which demount to accommodate wheelchairs.

Protours, Heswall

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess F759 FDV has passed to Stafford Bus Centre, Cotes Heath (dealer).

Pulham, Bourton-on-the-Water, Glos

Leased Optare Solo M850/B27F YE52 KPK/L are used on service 55 (Cirencester-Moreton in the Marsh), taken on from Beaumont Travel.

The latest DAFs for the Sanders of Holt fleet are two East Lancs Myllennium-bodied SB220s previously operated on car park shuttles at London Luton Airport. W261 CDN is seen in Norwich, with destination information on a windscreen sticker. GRAHAME BESSEY

Reading Transport

Scania OmniDekka 828 (YN06 JWJ) has been re-registered MRD 1, the mark that once graced the Mayor of Reading's official car. DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 701 — MRD 1 from new — has become J257 NLU.

New Euro4-engined, air-conditioned Scania OmniCity CN270UBs 1-5 are due in service with the Goldline division in August on an enhanced service between Reading Station and Thames Valley Park. Samantha Beeley designed their new livery. The other seven OmniCitys, CN230UBs, are due in Newbury in September and will carry a new livery for the Vodafone staff contract, majoring on their Euro4 engines.

DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 514/7 (N514/7 YTF) are being retained by Reading for the time being but the remainder of the batch, 511-3/5/6/8-20 (M511-3 PDP, N515/8-20 YTF), has transferred to Newbury, where 504/9 (G504/9 XBL) are being kept to make up numbers, but 501-3/5-8/10 (G501 XBL etc) have been withdrawn. Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) collected 501-6/8/10 in June.

Of the Olympians sold to Ensign in May, 311, 12 (E911/2 DRD), passed to Whippet, Fenstanton in mid-June. Ensign has sold MetroRider 624 to Mann, Gravesend, 627 to North West Travel, Liverpool and 629 to ASD Coaches, Strood). MetroRider 632 has transferred from Newbury to Reading, primarily as a crew shuttle and for route familiarisation.

Reay, Wigton, Cumbria

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah C33F MX06 MXJ/Z and Scania K114EB4/Irizar PBs YN06 NYA/B, this latter pair in Trafalgar Tours livery. Another K114 is in stock here, as yet unregistered.

Bova Futura YJ05 FXH has passed to Weardale, Stanhope.

Redline, Penwortham, Lancs

Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RZ/Alexander H47/32F F97 PRE has been acquired from Arriva North West.

Redwing, London

New Mercedes-Benz Touro 1836RL/Caetano coaches for the main fleet are C49Ft-seated 216/7 (BX06 UMK/L) and C53F-seated 254/6-9 (BX06 UME-H/J)

The first Volvos ordered for some time calls for two B12Ms FJ06 ZLZ, ZMO and B12Bs FJ06 ZMU/V, all with Berkhof C51Ft bodies, for the TWH Travel fleet.

Regal Busways, Highwood, Essex

Acquisitions for new Kick-Start route 1/A/B to Canvey Island are Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers W772 URP, in fleet livery and 611 (X211 ONH) in silver for the ExCel centre parking in Docklands, where it was formerly used.

Volvo B6/Marshall 469 (L669 MFL) has been withdrawn, leaving only 465 (L665 MFL).

Robin Hood Travel, Rudyard, Staffs

The first new Mercedes-Benz here is a C34F Tourino midicoach, BX06 ULZ.

Rosa, Barnsley

New are MAN 18.360/Noge Catalan C52Ft GL06 HDL, HOL.

Rossendale Transport

Six used Dennis Dart SLFs due for Greater Manchester PTE schools work are ex-Halton Marshall B39F-bodied 10/2 (R410 XFL, R712 MEW) and Alexander ALX200 DP43F-bodied Super Darts 13-6 (X763-6 UKS), ex-Munro, Jedburgh.

Sanders, Holt, Norfolk

Acquired from London Luton Airport are DAF SB220/East Lancs Myllennium W261/2 CDN. They were B30D but have been converted to single door.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet, has supplied DAF SB3000/Ikarus Blue Danube C53F P712-5 RWU, latterly with Amber-Lee, Rochester, which acquired them with the North Kent Express business.

Former Bridgend Bus Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano W393/6 WPX are in store at Newport, where Scania N113DRB/East Lancs W301 MKY is back in use.

Silver Star, Caernarfon

Volvo B7R/Plaxton Primas W14 PCL, X779 XEX have been re-registered 224 ENG and 4512 UR respectively, and B10M/Van Hool X777 GSM has become YVF 158.

Simonds, Botesdale, Norfolk

Recently acquired is YD02 PXN, a Volvo B12M-62/Van-Hool Alizée C49Ft.

Skills, Nottingham

New are Setra S416 GT-HD Comfort Class 13m C49F coaches, SIL 7025/7/8, 7565, 9126.

SM Travel, Harlow

New are Irisbus Agora Line B44F EU06 KHK, Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano B28F EU06 KDK/J and Alexander-Dennis Dart MPD B29F EU06 KNR.

South Yorkshire, Ackworth, Pontefract

Ex-Lancaster City Transport Optare MetroRider MR01/B31F 203 (K449 YCW) is here from Stringer, Pontefract.

Speedwell, Glossop

Acquired are Dennis Dart/Carlyle H846 NOC, ex-Cross Gates Motors, and J310 BVO, a DAF SB220/Optare Delta latterly with Konectbus, Dereham.

Stagecoach Devon ST

New Optare Solo/B25F 47313 (WA06 NHF) is at Exeter. The rest of the new Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B38F are 34860/1/70/1/3-7 (WA06 HMJ/K, WA06 HND/E/G/H/J-L). 34859-69 are at Exeter, 34870-7 at Torquay.

Leyland Olympian ON2R50G13Z4/Alexander RL-type H47/32F 14714/7 (K714/7 ASC) and DPH43/27F-seated 14986/8/9 (K236/8/9 NHC) have been transferred from Stagecoach Devon. A third ex-Stagecoach London DAF SB220/Optare Delta driver trainer is 26032 (K632 HWX).

Stagecoach Oxford Brookes Bus-liveried TransBus Trident/President H47/27F 18054/5 (KX53 VNE/F) are on loan to Torquay for the summer, but Optare Solo 47106 (WA04 TXX) has gone to Oxford.

Leyland Olympian 14512 (F512 NJE) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 40507 (N507 BJA) are in reserve, but Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32431/2/4/5 (N731 XDV etc) have been reinstated at Torquay.

There has been a clear out of Mercedes 709Ds; 40506/15/51/3, 40711 (N506/15 BJA, M351/3 JBO, M711 FMR) await disposal while 40492, 40545/50/4/60, (N492 RVK, M345/50/4 /60 JBO), 40698/9, 40701-7 (M698/9,

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

VE Veolia

WG Wellglade Group

701-3 EDD, M704-7 JDG) and former Hull Scania N112/East Lancs single-deckers 28704/6 (F704 BAT, F706 CAG), Scania N113CRB/Alexander PS 28913 (F913 JRG), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 32251 (NDZ 3151) and Leyland Tiger 59014 (C495 LJV) have been sold.

Stagecoach East ST

Leyland Olympians 14020-2/4/40 (F620-2/4 MSL, G640 EVV), 14179 (C179 ECK), 14631 (C631 LFT), 14935 (C962 XVC) have been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

New Optare Solos in service at Chesterfield are 47317-25 (YN06 UGO/P/R/S/T/U/V/W/Y). Transferred in from Stagecoach London are Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400s 17039-47/62/3 (S839 BWC, T640-7/62/3 KPU), being prepared for use at Hull. Stagecoach Manchester Tridents 17701-20 are also expected later at Hull.

Megabus.com Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 52446 (R456 FCE) has been transferred to Stagecoach Warwickshire.

In reserve are Leyland Olympians 13165/70/8/81/5/93/5 (C165 YBA etc), 13221 (C221 CBU), 14340/2 (G340/2 KKW), 14665 (C665 LFT), 14901/8/9/12/8/22/5 (E901 KYR etc), Dennis Dominators 15077/9-81 (F77 TFU, G79-81 VFW), open-top Leyland Fleetline 15513 (MBE 613R), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40757/8/60/2/4/72/4 (N757/8/60 CKU, N762/472/4 EWG), 40801 (P251 NKH), Mercedes Varios 42355-8 (S355-8 KEF), 42532/57/76/8/9/82/3/5/7/9/90 (P532/57 PNE, T56/8 JKG, T38 PTG, T582/3/5/7/9/90 SKG) and Volvo B10M 52095 (J456 FSR). Awaiting disposal are Olympians 13026, 14170 (A26 ORJ, C170 ECK), Dominator 15044 (F144 BKH) and B10M 52051 (IIL 1321). Only five Dominators remain operational, 15084/5/92-4.

As noted below, the Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet is to transfer to Stagecoach Lincolnshire in September.

Stagecoach Lincolnshire ST

More new MAN 18.220/Alexander Dennis ALX300 B42F are 22414-8 (FX06 AVD-G, AWC). The 18.220s from Stagecoach North West, 22801-3/8/11/2 (V801 DFV etc), were only on loan and have been withdrawn, pending return there.

Twelve ex-Stagecoach London Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B32F are 34182-9/91-4 (W182-9/91-4 DNO).

Ex-London DAF SB220/Optare Delta trainers 26013/4/8/35 (J713 DAP, J714/8 CYG, K635 HWX) are at Lincoln. The three Leyland National Greenways, 25470/1/86 (NVL 165, HIL 8420, AFM 1W) are out of use.

Stagecoach East Midlands' Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet is to be amalgamated with Lincolnshire in September. It comprises Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine 14667 (H667 BNL), Dennis Dominator/Alexander RH 15080/1 (G80/1 VFW), Dominator/East Lancs 15084/5/92-4 (H484/5 BEE, J92-4 DJV), Dennis Tridents 17673-88 (T373-7 FUG, V378-85 EWE, T370-2 FUG), 18316-20/91/2 (YN05 XNG/H/J-L, YN55 ZZF/G), Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde 27301-3 (M210-3 DRG), Lance/Optare Sigma 27304 (M204 VRG), Lance/East Lancs EL2000 22701-9 (K701-4 NDO, L705-9 HFU), Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 32069/73 (M69, 73 VJO), 32111 (K211 SRH), 32419/20/3/5/6 (N419 MBW etc) and Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurbans 52143/5/7, 52207/9/13/59, 52351/7/81 (K573/5 DFS, PS 2743, L637/9/43 LDT, M942 TSX, P151/7 ASA, P181 PRH).

Stagecoach London ST

As reported in News this month, this company is being sold to Macquarie Bank of Australia, with completion scheduled for September.

Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400s 17048/9 (T648/9 KPU) are being transferred into the private hire fleet, while similar 17039-47/62/3 (S839 BWC, T640-7/62/3 KPU) have gone to Stagecoach East Midlands in Hull. Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Deauville 45 C49Ft 52022/3 (WLT 890, 630 DYE; *L157/8 LBW*) have passed to Stagecoach North West, Dennis Dart/Plaxton 34111/8 (V173, 118 MVX) to Stagecoach Warwickshire, 34114/6 (V114/6 MVX) to Stagecoach Manchester, 34182-9/91-4 (W182-9/91-4 DNO) to Stagecoach Lincolnshire and 34195 (W195 DNO) to Stagecoach Bluebird. DAF SB220/Optare Delta trainer 26032 (K632 HWX) is at Stagecoach Devon. Also at Manchester are former Megabus.com ex-Hong Kong Leyland Olympians 13606/7 (J702/3 HMY), which are to be used on Magic Bus work.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

The first Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-deckers here are 19001-22 (MX06 LUO, MX06 XAA-E/G/H/J-P/R-W/Y), of which 19003/4 were delivered by 4 July.

Dennis Darts SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B31D 34114/6 (V114/6 MVX) were transferred from Stagecoach London in mid-June. Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH CH53/41F 13606/7 (J702/3 HMY) transferred from London in May to be prepared for Magic Bus work, joined by 13604 (331 HWD) from Stagecoach Wales and 13616 (G189 YRJ), which was the Megabus.com spare bus at Princess Road. Also transferred to Magic Bus duties are Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladin 20674 (R674 HCD) and 20988/9/91-3 (R988 XVM etc), and more are to be repainted blue. They are being branded for Piccadilly-Levenshulme short workings of the 192.

With the ending of Manchester's direct involvement in Megabus.com work, Neoplan Skyliner 50148 (MX05 BWM) has been transferred to Stagecoach Wales.

Dennis Tridents 17614 (V614 DJA) and 18194 (MX54 LRE) have been transferred to Stagecoach South East, the latter after fire damage repairs. Tridents 17701-20 are due to go to Stagecoach East Midlands (Hull), 17721/3-7/30, 18309 to Devon (Exeter), 18376/7 to Devon (Torquay) and 18378-82 to Bluebird (Inverness).

Ex-Cambridge Leyland Olympians 14506-9/13 (F506-9/13 NJE) moved on to Stagecoach Yorkshire in early June without being used here. Leyland Olympians 13212/5/55 (C212/5 CBU, C255 FRJ) have been withdrawn for disposal, 13255 going to the Manchester Museum of Transport for preservation. The only pre-deregulation buses then left in main fleet use here were Olympians 13234/77 (C234 ENE, D277 JVR). Also withdrawn is ex-London taxi 92103 (K654 NME).

Stagecoach Merseyside ST

Volvo B10B/Wright Endurance B49F 21008/9-11/3 (M647-50 YLV, N660 EKD) have gone to Stagecoach Yorkshire. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 32178/82 (K582 MGT, K857 LGN) have gone to Stagecoach North East.

Stagecoach North East ST

Further MAN 18.220/Alexander Dennis ALX300 for service X47 in Newcastle are 22411-3 (NK06 LUY/Z/P), 22411/3 named *Buster the Bus* and *Tootie Fruity* respectively. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers from Stagecoach Merseyside are 32178/82 (K582 MGT, K857 LGN).

Stagecoach North West ST

Former Oxford Tube Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Deauville 45 C49Ft 52022/3 (WLT 890, 630 DYE; *L157/8 LBW*) have arrived here from London, to be used as private hire vehicles.

Transferred to Stagecoach South East is Megabus.com-liveried Leyland Olympian/Alexander tri-axle 13623 (H494 LNA, *ES 1962*).

Stagecoach Oxford ST

Three new Optare Solos were due in June for recently won Oxfordshire County Council tendered services. Solo/B25F 47106 (WA04 TXX) is here from Stagecoach Devon,

Brookes Bus TransBus Trident/President H47/27F 18054/5 (KX53 VNE/F) have gone to Stagecoach Devon for the summer.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40108/10/62 (L308/10 YDU, N362 AVV), 40654/7/8 (N654/7/8 VSS) and Volvo B10M trainer 52037 (4012 VC, *N47 MJO*) have been sold.

Stagecoach South East ST

The new Alexander Dennis Tridents for the Portsmouth-Brighton Coastliner 700 service, 18510-27 (GX06 DXH/J-M/O/P/R-W/Y/Z, DYA-C), are shared between Farlington, Portsmouth (18510-7) and at 18518-27 (Worthing). Regular duplicate journeys being operated on this increasingly popular service and the intention is to operate the service entirely with Tridents with an increased frequency east of Littlehampton. Interurban services are proving particularly popular with pensioners on free fares and more double-deckers are needed. Transferred from Stagecoach Warwickshire are Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H47/28F 18502-5 (KX06 LYU-W/Y), while similar 18194 (MX54 LRE) and H51/28F 17614 (V614 DJA) have come from Stagecoach Manchester.

East Kent's three new Tridents, 18528-30 (GX06 DYS-U), are to enhance the Canterbury-Herne Bay Triangle service.

New Optare Solo M850SL/B25F at Hants & Surrey are 47304-12 (GX06 DYD/F-H/J/M-P) for Aldershot town services 4 and 5. Much of the Dover town network will also likely be converted to Solos.

Transferred into Worthing from Stagecoach North West is Megabus.com-liveried Leyland Olympian ON3R49C18Z4/Alexander DPH53/39Ft 13623 (H494 LNA, *ES 1962*).

As illustrated last month, Hants & Surrey Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 33020 (T593 CGT) and Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 16228 (P228 VCK) have been repainted into traditional Aldershot & District livery. Dart 32448 (400 DCD, *GM 7642*) has been re-registered N977 RCD, the mark from the first convertible open-top Queen Mary being transferred to a private car.

Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts 34641-4 (GX54 DWM-P) have been transferred to Stagecoach Warwickshire in exchange for Tridents 18502-5. Leyland Olympians 14714/7 (K714/7 ASC) and 14986/8/9 (K236/8/9 NHC) have gone to Stagecoach Devon.

The last former Southdown service buses (excluding heritage vehicles) have departed the Stagecoach South East fleet. Green-liveried Volvo Citybus B10M/Northern Counties 15202 (F302 MYJ) has been sold to preservationist Chris Pearce.

Withdrawn for disposal are Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type 14960 (G210 SSL) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40892 (N192 LPN) and 40908/35/40 (N908 NAP etc). The 709Ds have all been sold to Stephenson (dealer) Rochford together with 40923 (N923 NHP), while Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32578 (K578 NHC) is another sold to Norfolk Green, Kings Lynn.

Stagecoach Wales ST

Neoplan Skyliner CH65/26Ft 50148 (MX05 BWM) is at Cwmbran, ex-Stagecoach Manchester, replacing Leyland Olympian 13604 (331 HWD), which went to Manchester. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wadham Stringer 40595 (M92 JHB) has gone to Stagecoach West.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

Nuneaton's recent Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400

Below: The acquisition of the Glyn Williams business earlier this year added six Turkish-built BMC Falcons to the Stagecoach Wales fleet, including 29705 (CN04 RFY). DANIEL STAZICKER

H47/28F 18502-5 (KX06 LYU-W/Y) were withdrawn on 23 June and transferred to Stagecoach South East, exchanged for Alexander Dennis Pointer Dart/B38F 34641-4 (GX54 DWM-P). Dennis Dart/Plaxton B31D 34111/8 (V173, 118 MVX) have been transferred from London, Megabus.com Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 52446 (R456 FCE) has from Stagecoach East Midlands to Rugby.

Stagecoach West ST

Swindon's recent delivery of new vehicles is due to be used on a Kick-Start scheme to upgrade services on the Swindon-Wootton Bassett corridor, but commencement was delayed by major roadworks in Wootton Bassett.

Transferred into Cheltenham & Gloucester are Leyland Olympian/Alexander DPH43/27F 14990 (K240 NHC) from Stagecoach South East and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wadham Stringer 40595 (M92 JHB) from Stagecoach Wales.

Swindon & District Leyland Olympians 14263/4 (J123/4 XHH) and Volvo Olympians 16044/99, 16443 (P644 SEV, R207 XNO, N343 HGK) have moved to Cheltenham & Gloucester while Cheltenham & Gloucester Dennis Dart SLFs 33945/6 (V945/6 DFH) are at Cheltenham District.

Cheltenham & Gloucester Leyland Olympian/Roe 14282 (JHU 899X), 14288/9/91-3 (LWS 36/7/9-41Y), 14294 (NTC 132Y), Leyland Olympian/Optare 14500/1 (E500/1 EFL), plus Swindon & District Leyland Olympian/Alexander 14624 (C624 LFT) are all in reserve. The Roe-bodied Olympians were the last link with Bristol Omnibus days and an unofficial last running day took place on 27 May with three operating services 46/93 (Cheltenham/Gloucester-Forest Green). Cheltenham & Gloucester Leyland Olympian/Roe 14286 (LWS 34Y) has been withdrawn, as have the last Volvo B6s, 30723 (M73 HHB) and 30831 (L831 CDG). Swindon & District Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban 52157 (L157 JNH) has also been withdrawn.

Reserve vehicles back in service with Cheltenham & Gloucester are Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 32241 (K986 CBO) and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall 41806 (L806 XDG). Swindon & District 20685 is another Volvo B10M/Alexander PS refurbished.

Stagecoach Yorkshire ST

Sheffield service 88 (High Green-Bents Green) is being converted to low-floor operation from 30 July using 10 of the current group order for 165 Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts.

Volvo B10B/Wright Endurance B49F 21008/9-11/3 (M647-50 YLV, N660 EKD) have been transferred from Stagecoach Merseyside. From Stagecoach East (via Manchester, unused) to replace MCW Metrobuses have come Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RZ/Northern Counties H45/30F 14506-9/13 (F506 NJE etc), which were new to Cambus. Four of these were still in old Stagecoach livery, and are being refurbished before use.

Transfer of Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS 20713/21/51 (K713 DAO etc) from Stagecoach North West allowed the unique pair of Spartan TXM2242/East Lancs single-deckers, 29891/2 (N201 CKY, P202 KKY), to be withdrawn. I understand that Bromyard Omnibus Company has expressed interest in them. However, unique Kirn Mogul 29898 (1901 HE) is expected to remain in service as its components are readily available and in common with other types.

Most of Ecclesfield's Volvo B6/Alexander Dashes had been repainted in Stagecoach livery by 2 May, the first low-floor repainted being rare B6LE/Plaxton Pointer 31032 (P101 NDT).

Volvo B10M coach 52522 (YTC 49, *T872 RGA*) and Volvo Olympian 16867 (YTC 838, *N417 JBV*) have reverted to their original registrations.

Dennis Darts 32189/90/5, 32493/7 (J401/2 XHL, K1 YTB, K419 HWG, L423 LET) have been withdrawn for disposal.

Stansted Transit

New Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart EU06 KOW operates regularly on service 73A (Chelmsford-Maldon). Former Limebourne/Connex Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Compass T401 LGP is here, in full fleet livery.

Stephenson, Cowan Bridge, Lancs

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah SN05 HVO is here from D&E, Inverness, O614D/Crest C24F T580 LHN from First Choice, South Moor.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex,

The operational fleet has expanded recently. Current stock comprises **Leyland Olympians:** ECW-bodied UAR 219Y, B752 GSC, C28, 62, 64, 77, 81/2, 92/4, 106/9 CHM, C174/6 ECK, C807 BYY, Alexander-bodied C382/3 SAO, F303 JTY and Leyland-bodied G305 UYK; **Dennis Darts**: K716 KGU, K108 SAG, P749 HND, SK02 XGO/P, EU03 CFX/Y, EU05 CZA; **Volvo B10M coaches:** A16-9 SOE, N23 RTN, N70 SLK, N746 BAU; and **Leyland Tiger/Plaxton** A14 SOE.

A notable acquisition for heritage and service use is former Southend Transport Leyland Fleetline FE33ALR/Northern Counties MRJ 233W, which made its debut at the June Southend rally. Ex-Southdown Leyland Titan PD3/4/Northern Counties convertible open-topper 424 DCD is also owned, but rarely appears.

Above: Stagecoach 21008 (M647 YLV) is one of five Wright Endurance-bodied Volvo B10Bs transferred from Merseyside to Yorkshire, where they join similar buses that Traction Group bought from Blazefield fleets. It retains the red livery of original owner CMT Buses and also carries local fleetnumber 250 pending integration of the Yorkshire Traction and Stagecoach systems. JEFF TATTERSALL

Above: The third of Thames Travel's four new East Lancs-bodied Scania N94UB OmniTown midibuses is 306 (PF06 ENN), seen in Oxford. MARK LYONS

Stott, Oldham

Loss of Stockport area services led to the sale of Mercedes-Benz Varios KE53 HGP/V/X/Y.

Stringer, Pontefract

Optare MetroRider K449 YCW has been sold to South Yorkshire Motors.

Swanbrook, Cheltenham

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814 YX55 DWE is dedicated to the Gloucester-Cirencester service regained from Beaumont Travel. It came from Malcolm Watkins (dealer) and had previously worked with Hutchinson, Easingwold. MCW Metrobus A926 SUL is being cannibalised.

Taf Valley, Whitland, Carmarthenshire

The first Irisbus EuroRider for this fleet is Plaxton Panther C49Ft/C53F-bodied BC06 TAF.

Terravision, London

Volvo B12B/Jonckherre FJ55 BXR is new to this Italian-owned operator of London-Stansted Airport services.

Thames Travel, Wallingford

Unusual additions are Scania N94UB/East Lancs OmniTown B31F 106, 206, 306, 406 (PF06 ENL-O) for service X39 (Wallingford-Oxford). They have the Esteem-style frontal styling.

Thamesdown Transport

Dennis Dart SLFs 199, 200 (WV02 NNB/C) are in Priory Vale Shuttle blue/magenta/white livery, ex-Park-&-Ride orange/green. Dart SLF 159 (P159 VHR) has had its grey skirt repainted experimentally in green.

Withdrawn are Dart/Plaxton Pointers 106/10/7 (K106/10 OMW, M117 BMR) and ECW-bodied Leyland Fleetlines 300/3 (UMR 200T, BMR 203V). Darts 113/6 (M113/6 BMR) have passed to Hoggan European, Pentrechwyth and 106 to Sureline, Weymouth, but 108 (K108 OMV) was cannibalised and its remains sold for scrap in April.

Thornes, Hemingbrough, N Yorks

Former Maidstone & District Beadle-Leyland integral 32 (VSJ 566, *OKP 980*) has been restored, returned to service and has regained its original registration, livery and M&D fleetnumber CO252. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 136 (OKP 980, *N200 VHO*) was re-registered SHO 800, similar 135 (SHO 800, *M200 VHO*) became SED 232 and Bedford SB/Duple Super Vega SED 232 became 696 UXO and awaits restoration.

Thurmaston Bus, Leicester

The last Leyland Atlanteans, East Lancs-bodied LRR 689/91W, have left the fleet.

TM Travel, Staveley, Chesterfield

Acquired ex-Speedwell, Glossop is Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F MX04 VMK.

continued overleaf...

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services

DG Comfort Delgro

EB Ensignbus

EY EYMS Group

FG FirstGroup

GA Go-Ahead Group

NX National Express Group

ST Stagecoach Group

TD Transdev

TGM Tellings - Golden Miller

VE Veolia

WG Wellglade Group

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur C53F R926 YBA and Plaxton Primo B28F YN06 CYE have been on loan from Plaxton.

Following accident-damage, Leyland Olympian/ECW D147 FYM has been withdrawn. Mercedes-Benz Vario W44 TMT has gone to Plaxton, Anston (dealer), Leyland Titan OHV 713Y to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer). Volvo B10M L4 TCC has passed to Yellow Coach Hire, Warrenpoint.

Townlynx, Holywell

Former East Midland Leyland Tiger/Alexander P-type B52F B627 DWF is in stock.

Transdev Burnley & Pendle TD

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash B40F 644 (L644 OWY) has come from Keighley & District, prompting another B6, 644 (M876 NWK), to be renumbered 676. Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 702 (W702 BFV) has returned from Harrogate & District, while Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider 505 (N505 HWY) has gone to Harrogate & District and Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President 441 (Y711 HRN) has gone to Yorkshire Coastliner.

Transdev Harrogate & District TD

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown DP47F 1041 (X441 YUB) came on loan from Lancashire United for flower show specials but had already been repainted red and cream and entered service at Harrogate. Burnley & Pendle Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider DP49F 505 (N505 HWY) also came on loan and is expected to be transferred permanently, to replace the solitary B10M here, East Lancs-bodied 426 (K26 WBV), new to Burnley & Pendle.

Following the return of Volvo B6BLE 602 from refurbishment at Burnley, 603 was not dispatched for similar treatment, suggesting the programme is suspended. Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 702 (W702 BFV), here to cover for the refurbishment programme, has returned to Burnley & Pendle.

Transdev Keighley & District TD

The last vehicle in Airedale Shuttle livery, Volvo B10BLE 561, has been repainted in standard livery. Volvo B6 223 (L644 OWY) has been transferred to Burnley & Pendle.

Transdev London TD

The seven Scania OmniCity double-deckers for the 148 are due in August, and a further eight have been ordered for October delivery. All the Dennis Dart/Wright Crusaders, CD1-8 (VDZ 8001-8), have gone to Yellow Buses in Bournemouth.

Transdev Yellow Buses TD

The ex-Transdev London Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusaders are 150-7 (VDZ 8001-8).

Dennis Lance/East Lancs 401/3-5 (L401/3-5 BFX), advertised for sale for some time, have been sold to Ensignbus (dealer), Purfleet. 405 has passed to Carter, Ipswich. 402/6 remain in the fleet. Also sold to Ensign are Dennis Dominator/East Lancs 251/6/9/63/6 (H251/6/9/63 JJT, J266 SPR), while 252 (H252 JJT) has gone to Wigley (dealer), Carlton and 265 (H265 JJT) is withdrawn.

Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool Alizée coaches 330/1 (T330/1 AFX) have also left the fleet.

Transdev Yorkshire Coastliner TD

Transferred from Burnley & Pendle is Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F 441 (Y711 HRN). It has been re-upholstered, although not reseated, and is in current Coastliner livery.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale 431 (W431 CWX), reported sold last month to First Somerset & Avon, was the last Olympian and step-entrance vehicle in this fleet.

Travellers Choice, Carnforth

New are Volvo B12B/Jonckheere C49Ft PN06 KJK, B7R/Plaxton C57F PN06 KJL, B7R/Sunsundegui C57F PN06 KJO and B12B/Jonckheere C49Ft PN06 KJU.

Travel London NX

An order has been placed for 27 Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-deckers. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 16 (1816 MW) caught fire while operating a school service in Shepperton in June; the fire melted the road surface.

Travel West Midlands NX

New are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 4700-17 (BU06 CWR/T/V-Z, CXA-E/G/H/J-M), in a new livery, similar to that on the Scania OmniCity and Enviro400 evaluation vehicles, with upswept swoops of red, blue and silver.

Above: Transdev Yellow Buses has used its ex-London United Wright Crusader-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs, including 157 (VDZ 8008), to relaunch its rationalised new route network in Bournemouth. GRAHAM INNES

Withdrawn are Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario 249 (R249 XDA), Plaxton Beaver-bodied 261/3 (R261/3 XDA), Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusaders 587/92/3 (R587 YON etc), 645/60-3 (S645 VOA etc) and MCW Metrobuses 2763 (A763 WVP), 2918/52/3 (D918/52/3 NDA). Leyland Lynxes 1231 (G231 EOG) and driver trainer 9149 (G149 EOG), and Metrobuses 2559 (POG 559Y), 2757/67 (A757/67 WVP), 2814/28/39/68 (B814/28/39 AOP, B868 DOM) have been sold.

Truronian, Truro

The new articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro O530G/AB49T for the Eden Project park-&-ride service are AN/BN/CN02 EDN, which are contributing to the project's environmental credentials by replacing all five TransBus Enviro300/B44F on the service, AN/BN/CN/DN/EN02 EDN, which have been returned to Dawsonrentals, which re-registered Enviro300s BN/CN02 EDN as KW02 DRO/V, DSE.

Also new are Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts WK06 AFU/V, Autosan Eagle A1012T/B67F BX06 NZT and, in July last year, Optare Solo M880/B29F YJ05 XNV.

Tyrer, Nelson

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds G236 FJC and J214 KTT were sold via BCA Auctions, Belle Vue.

Uno, Hatfield, Herts

LOTS reports that five Mercedes-Benz Citaros and two Scania OmniCitys are due in August.

Via Travel, Shavington, Cheshire

East Lancs-rebodied Volvo B10M PJI 9173 (*NCS 117W*), acquired for service X81 (Winsford-Hanley), was latterly with Rossendale Transport and new to Western Scottish with a Duple Dominant III body.

Warrington Borough Transport

The first Dennis Dart SLFs in the new Network Warrington livery, 1-3 (T201-3 AFM), display fleet numbers 01-03. All early Dart SLFs are to be repainted and retrimmed.

Weardale, Stanhope, Co Durham

An unusual addition is former Hong Kong Citybus three-axle Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-type L666 WMS (*FS 5611*). Its UK registration maintains the Weardale tradition of using 6s. Also acquired — from Reay, Wigton — is Bova Futura YJ05 FXH. Further ex-Dublin Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-types in preparation are 91 D 10060, 10112/9, with more to follow.

MCW Metrobuses A633 BCN and C751/65/8/77 OCN are on loan from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), along with ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians C665/72 LJR, to work former Go North East school contracts while other vehicles are sourced.

Weavaway, Newbury

Acquired during May and June were the remaining seven vehicles from Holmeswood Coaches, DAF SB3000WS/Van Hool C55F LUI 9691 (*L551 EHD*), similar LUI 9694/5 (*L554/0 EHD*) but up-seated to C57F by Moseley, South Elmsall. These and the previous one were re-registered from LUI 9691/3-5 to C1-4 OXF. Moseley also upseated Scania/Van Hool N170/1 AAG, N367/8 TJT to C57F by Moseley before delivery and they are re-registered C5-8 OXF, while Volvo B7R/Plaxton YN53 EHZ is X70 OXF. These nine vehicles plus two Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Nordics have moved to an additional yard at Culham to cover recently won Oxfordshire contracts.

A further vehicle acquired is former New World First Bus, Hong Kong, MCW Metrobus OIL 4201 (E817 JAR, *DU 1637*) latterly with Todd, Flintham.

Disposals include Scania/Irizar B10 MNX (*S331 SET*) and R19 CES (*T908 LKE*) to Moseley (dealer), Wellington, which has sold similar B10 MTT (*T72 JHE*) to Hazell, Northlew. Dennis Condor/Duple Metsec B10 MKF (*G709 FVX, EG 7583*) passed to Allander, Milngavie in June, while Southdown PSV (dealer), Copthorne has sold similar B10 MBD to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet. Plaxton (dealer), Anston has sold Neoplan P504 LMO (*SOB 10M, 327 RFC, P899 MHE*) to Scaife, Great Ayton.

Below: A six-wheeler with three axles and three sixes in its registration. Weardale L666 WMS is an Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian new to Hong Kong Citybus in 1993 as its No.386 (FS 5611). STEVEN HODGSON

Whippet, Fenstanton, Cambs
Acquired from Reading Buses, via Ensign (dealer), Purfleet, are Leyland Olympian/Optare H42/26F E911/2 DRD.

White, Culham, Oxfordshire
Ex-Eastbourne Buses Optare Solo M850/B29F YE52 FGZ is at work here and was repainted into yellow fleet livery before delivery. Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F M461 JPA is in stock from Pickford, Chippenham, but 709D/Alexander JJZ 3576 (*L151 FRJ*) has been sold.

Wicks, Braintree
This operator has acquired the Goodwin, Braintree business along with Volvo B10M/Berkhof ANZ 3675 (*FHJ 841Y*) and Leyland Tiger/Van Hool A147 RMJ.

Wilfreda-Beehive, Adwick-le-Street, S Yorks
New Optare Tempo YJ06 FZK has been in use on Airport Arrow service 707, substituting for specially liveried YJ05 XOO.

Williams of Criccieith, Porthmadog
Mercedes-Benz 709D/PMT G682 ADD has been re-registered WIL 6030.

Woodside, Sheffield
Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer M4 WMT (*P10 WJO*) has been sold to Dawsonrentals (dealer) in part exchange for Volvo B10M/Van Hool Alizée N445 PYS, new to Park. Hamilton.

Worthing Coaches
Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 33 (S45 BVC) has been acquired from De Courcey, Coventry.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport
DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 41-3 (MAN 41-3H) have been repainted, and the fleetnumber style has returned to former IoMT pattern rather than that used in Eastbourne. All-Leyland Olympian 88 (BMN 88G) passed last year to Geoff Amos, Eydon.

Work is progressing on vintage fleet 1928 Thornycroft BC13 (MN 5454). Leyland Titan PD3/Metro-Cammell 67 (67 UMN) and fine ex-Douglas AEC Regent III/Northern Counties 64 (KMN 835) are kept at Ramsey.

IoMT has sold its breakdown tender, emergencies being dealt with by private contractors.

Protours
Iveco Daily 59.12/Leicester Carriage Builders B24FL 21 (MAN 111B, *S946 ERE*) has been acquired from Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. Bedfords sold are PJK/Duple 29 (MAN 111B), for non-psv use, and YNT/Plaxton Paramount 8 (MAN 111L), to Dave Molyneux as a race support vehicle. The remains of YNT/Duple 52 (GMN 510V, *H111 MAN, DNK 106Y*) went for scrap.

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FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Paul James Coaches Ltd.
BASED:	Head Office — Grange Farm Business Park, Grange Road, Hugglescote, Leicestershire.
DEPOTS:	The Scotlands, London Road, Coalville, and Saxby Station, Stapleford, near Melton Mowbray.
WEBSITE:	www.pauljamescoaches.co.uk
FOUNDED:	1967 as Paul James Minicoaches by Shay O'Brien, who had a driving school and other motor interests in Leicestershire. The business was named after one of his two sons, and remained small until both sons expanded into coach tours in the 1990s, later into tendered bus services, which for the past six years has been the biggest part of the business.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Twelve Leicestershire County Council routes operate west to Ashby de la Zouch, east to Peterborough, north to Nottingham and Grantham and south to Corby. As well covering the main interurban links, the company operates a Loughborough town service on Sundays, Rutland Flyers from Oakham to Melton Mowbray and Corby and a new 'Oakham Hopper' service started at the end of June.
LIVERY:	Cream and red, but eight Optare Solos and a solitary Tempo operate in Leicestershire's blue CrossCounty livery. The latest Solo is silver and purple, and five school coaches are yellow.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	14 coaches, 19 mini/midibuses (12 Solo 9.2m, four Mercedes-Benz 709Ds and 3 Plaxton-bodied Vario 0814Ds) and one Tempo single-decker. Of the coaches, a Setra S315GT and two Plaxton-bodied Volvos were bought new; there also are six more Volvos, three Leyland Tigers, a Dennis Javelin and an Autobus Nouvelle-bodied Vario. Half the fleet carries cherished PJC registrations.
NEWEST VEHICLES?:	Tempo YJ06 FXW arrived in April for the Rutland Flyer and Nottingham service, but Solo YJ06 YRX arrived in June for the Oakham Hopper.
MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:	Managing director Stephen O'Brien believes that the minicoach business really took off in 1972 when it purchased Commer minicoach FHC 869G with the rare rear-entrance Walker Fineline coachwork. Its body was later transferred on to another Commer van chassis and re-registered FRY 695L. He believes the Watford-based coachbuilder built only around a dozen such vehicles. In 1989, it bought Willowbrook 003-bodied Leyland Leopard VFA 70X, a type ordered mainly by the National Bus Company.

Below: CrossCounty-liveried Solo YN03 ZXB leaving Broad Marsh bus station, Nottingham on route 19 to Oakham, which incorporates the early former Barton route to Melton Mowbray. ROY MARSHALL

Below: One of three Leyland Tiger coaches, Plaxton Paramount 3500-bodied B290 YSL was acquired from Moffat & Williamson in Fife in 1997. ANDREW JAROSZ

GROUP CODES
AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
VE Veolia
WG Wellglade Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to: **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **15 August** for the **October** issue.

Aberfeldy Motors
Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12B 38 (SP06 EKA) was new in March.

Allan, Gorebridge
Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit CV55 FUD was new last November and re-registered C8 DWA in January. Irizar-bodied Scania K114EB4s B13/4 DWA were new in April and May respectively.

Allander, Milngavie
C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FLC12-280 AT94 (R96 HUA) and similar C53F-seated AT95 (V691 EWB) joined this fleet in April ex-Brown, South Kirkby. AT94 was re-registered 4143 AT in May. Futura FHD10-340XE SF06 NEJ and FHD12-340XEs SF06 NEN/O have been numbered AT91-3 respectively.

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster HXB50R AT50 (4143 AT, *P162 ANR*) was re-registered P162 ANR before being sold to Mentor (dealer), Hellaby in April together with Berkhof-bodied Volvo B10M-62 AT85 (R319 NRU, *KNP 1X, R319 NRU*).

A&P Coaches, Barrhead
Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L426 CPB has been repainted into the red and fawn livery.

Armstrong, Castle Douglas
Control of this company passed to King, Kirkcowan in April, although it appears to be continuing to trade as a separate entity.

Duple C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCL10/3RZM E237 MBX (*8853 DD, E237 MBX*) joined this fleet in October 2004 ex-First Cymru 22037 but has not been reported until now. More recent acquisitions comprise LAG Galaxy C50Ft-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R RLX 323 (*A952 MNC*) ex-Brownrigg, Thornhill in April; B33F-seated Optare Solo M920 Y257 KNB ex-Wilson, Rhu in May; and Van Hool Alizée C38F-bodied Volvo B10M-48 M821 YSC (*2154 K, M821 YSC, XSV 270*) ex-Marbill, Beith also in May. RLX 323 is not being used at present.

Vehicles out of the fleet by April comprise Mercedes-Benz O303/1R D930 UTU (*RIL 7844, D930 UTU, SEL 36, D347 CBC*), Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA F250 OFP (*A19 SMT, F250 OFP*), Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster HDB30R H361 VSS, and Autobus-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds S581 ACT, V376 LHS (*V7 CTL*).

Arriva Scotland West AA
Plaxton Pointer B39F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 1642/3 (S642/3 KHN) were transferred to this fleet from Arriva North East in April, while B49F-seated Leyland Lynx LX2Rs 5012/3 (J652/3 UHN) followed on loan and entered service from Inchinnan depot by June.

Further to previous reports, Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL 433 (N691 GUM) was renumbered 1620 last November.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 7954 (G154 TYT) was acquired by Focus, Much Hoole in March. Optare MetroRider MR15 921 (R921 JNL) and similar MR35 2621 (P621 FHN) returned to Arriva North East in April.

Austin, Earlston
Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12B YN05 UUZ was re-registered NKH 819 in May.

Avondale, Clydebank
From 16 June, this company was removed from operation of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport services in the Lanark area owing to poor performance. In addition to Lanark Ring'n'Ride service 800, journeys were also provided on services 8/A, 9 (Lanark-Glespin), 135 (Lanark town service) and 801 (Braehead-Lanark).

Ayrways, Patna
Alexander H47/37F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 C807 USG was acquired in April ex-Stagecoach Bluebird 15269.

Bryans, Denny
Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 PDZ 4204 (*G79 RGG*) was acquired in May from Fitzcharles, Grangemouth.

Coakley, Motherwell
SN06 BRX, another new B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart, arrived in May. Plaxton Pointer 2 B39F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs S775/6/8 RNE also joined the fleet then.

Monday to Saturday daytime service 291 (Motherwell-Carfin-Newarthill) was due to start on 21 July.

Collison, Stonehouse
Plaxton DP29FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF06 KHV was new in March and former military Wadham Stringer C70FA-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA L822 ASU (*47 KL 52*) arrived in April.

Crawford, Neilston
Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-48 N134 HSD (*NSK 920, N134 HSD*) was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in April.

Critchley, Tighnabruaich
From 10 June, this operator has provided a partial replacement for Royal Mail service 193 (Dunoon-Tighnabruaich), between Tighnabruaich and Portavadie on Saturdays only, on behalf of Argyll & Bute Council.

DJ International, Barrhead
Optare Vecta B42F-bodied MAN 11.190 M10 DVS (*M75 WYG*) was purchased in June from Orion, Wemyss Bay.

Left: The ties between Arriva Scotland West and the group's North East England fleet are becoming increasingly close, with common fleetnumbering and regular exchanges of vehicles. Leyland Lynx 2 No.5013 (J653 UHN) is one of two ex-United examples transferred on loan to the Scotland West depot at Inchinnan. Here, it loads at the out-of-town Braehead shopping centre on the Renfrew/Glasgow boundary. MURDOCH CURRIE

SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD

Dundee SQP starts operating

The first statutory quality partnership in the UK — between Dundee City Council and Travel Dundee (Scottish Column, November 2005) — took effect on key corridors on 1 April.

It is designed to give both parties greater confidence to invest in infrastructure improvements and fleet standards, building on arrangements that have already delivered benefits through the Dundee Public Transport Concordat.

Three key commitments formalised by the partners and the traffic commissioner are that all current financial agreements between the partners are being consolidated into a service level agreement subject to three-yearly best value review; a bus punctuality improvement partnership was introduced formally on 1 April on key corridors, to cover all routes by March 2008; and a public transport information strategy is to be adopted by the end of this year.

Enhanced public transport is an integral part of the city council's strategy. Under the partnership, it undertakes to maintain existing and deliver further bus showcase infrastructure. These schemes will involve:

- Roads improvements, including bus priority measures, which benefit bus passengers.
- Improved enforcement of bus lanes through decriminalised parking and camera enforcement.
- High quality bus stops and shelters, ensuring that they are maintained to the highest standards.
- Real time information at bus stops and through other systems, ensuring highest standards of maintenance.
- Automatic vehicle location equipment to aid service control.
- Improved pedestrian/passenger access to/from the bus network.
- Enhanced on-street security, including in-shelter closed circuit television.

Travel Dundee undertakes to complement the engineering and physical measures with:

- Network review to accommodate emerging developments and changes in land use.
- A review of operating hours to match changes in travel patterns.
- A review of existing services to enhance service provision and reduce passenger wait times.
- Maintain the average fleet age in accordance with central government targets.
- Continued provision of 100% easy access vehicles.
- Focused branding and marketing.
- Continued driver training in customer care and disability awareness.
- Maintenance of on-board security systems, including in-bus CCTV.
- Future exploratory work including vehicle emission reduction.
- Continued partnership working with Tayside Police, including the National Express Group's Operation Safer Travel initiative.

Both partners undertake to take a proactive attitude to new ideas and concepts, and will work together to promote positive messages about the benefits and successes of public transport within the city. The partnership recognises the mutual aims of each partner, which is to ensure a greater use of public transport and to deliver a service that is valued by its customers.

New Cairngorms National Park links are launched

Enhanced public transport links are available this year within the Cairngorms National Park.

Since the end of May, Highland Country Buses has been operating a new Cairngorm Link network using two Optare Solos fitted with bicycle racks as the backbone of the service. These services operate between Cairngorm Ski Centre and Grantown on

Spey via Aviemore and Boat of Garten (34) or Aviemore and Carrbridge (36).

Highland Country also carries bicycles on certain other journeys in the Badenoch and Strathspey areas, subject to bus and space availability. This applies to service 33 between Grantown and Tormore. Under the company's Rack-&-Ride scheme, it charges £3 for one day's unlimited use of the bike rack buses. Certain buses on service 15 (Inverness-Aviemore via Tomatin and Grantown) will carry bicycles on condition that they are in a bike bag, available for £3 in advance from the company at Inverness or Aviemore.

D&E Coaches of Inverness has won the contract to operate this summer's Cross Cairngorms National Park bus service to link Strathspey and Deeside, which is supported jointly by Highland Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Aberdeenshire Council. This 501 Heather Hopper service provides one return, through trip between Inverness and Ballater via Grantown on Spey from 3 July until 30 September. Bicycles are carried free on these journeys, subject to space being available. Stagecoach Bluebird operates a supplementary return journey between Ballater and Grantown, allowing connections with Cairngorm Link service 34 to/from Aviemore.

Connections are also available at Tomintoul with summer weekends Strathspey Stroller service 500 (Cullen-Cairngorm Mountain Railway) provided by Deveron Coaches on behalf of Moray Council, and at Strathdon or Ballater with Cross Cairngorms National Park Heather Hopper service 502 (Perth-Aberdeen via Pitlochry, Spittal of Glenshee, Braemar and Deeside), operated by Stagecoach Bluebird from 3 July until 19 August, with a possible extension until the end of September.

Ownership change for First Stop Travel

First Stop Travel, the south-west Glasgow operator originally set up as Govan Minibus Company, appears to have changed hands again at the beginning of June.

Last September, control passed from its original owners to the MacPherson family, which is involved in the Slaemuir Coaches business. Since then, there has been a period of change during which the livery has been altered and the fleet standardised on Mercedes-Benz vehicles, with other types such as Dennis Dart and Marshall Minibus departing. Now, First Stop Travel has joined the group of companies in which John Walker has an interest, either as a director or transport manager, including Barrhead Bus Company (which trades as Erskine Travel), Gulliver's Travels and Local Bus Company. Bellview Coaches was a previous Walker company.

During June, the allover yellow livery first used on Barrhead Bus Company vehicles with Erskine Travel logos, was applied to buses in each of the other fleets, albeit without fleetnames.

Services operated by this group of companies comprise 1 (Paisley-Auchenback), 2 (Barrhead local service), 21/24 (Neilston-Govan bus station via Paisley), 22E (Paisley-Erskine), 117 (Govan bus station-Paisley via Southern General Hospital), 134 (Govan bus station-Castlemilk), 149 (Govan bus station-South Nitshill), 217 (Govan bus station-Paisley via Drumoyne), 279 (Ibrox-Southern General Hospital) and 289 (Govan bus station-Drumoyne).

Right: The Erskine Travel version of Walker Group livery on M670 SSX, an ex-Stagecoach Volvo B6 with Alexander Dash body. STEVE MASKELL

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort DelGro
FG FirstGroup
LB Lothian Buses
NX National Express Group
RN Rapsons
ST Stagecoach Group

Docherty, Irvine

Further to the June issue, Bova Magiq SF06 NBY is a C49Ft-seated HD122-340.

Dodds, Ayr

Further to last month's issue, Irizar-bodied Scania K124IB T3 DOT and similar K124IB4 V9 DOT were re-registered T979 EGD and V319 FSW respectively in March. They were then sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough in April.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113CRB N7 DOT was re-registered N894 FSW in March, allowing Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 10SDA A20 HAV (*P431 JDT*) to become N7 DOT then.

Doig, Glasgow

Sunsundegui Sideral-bodied Volvo B12Ms SJ06 CBU/V were both new in May, together with KVC M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413CDi SN06 KHO.

Donaldson, Strathkinness

Crossbow-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D T902 VPP was sold to Ferguson (dealer), East Whitburn in March, by which time Rohill-bodied Renault Master GN03 CKL had gone to Holloway (dealer), Willenhall.

Edinburgh Coach Lines

Irizar-bodied Scania K114EB4 04 KK 2412 was re-registered SN04 UMB when transferred from the Bernard Kavanagh, Urlingford fleet in May last year, and re-registered again to PSU 617 in January. Setra S250 PSU 617 (*R846 FSX*) then regained its original registration.

Essbee, Coatbridge

Essbee C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 24 (SF06 RDO) was new in June.

First Aberdeen FG

New Wright Eclipse Urban B43F-bodied Volvo B7RLEs 69110/22-4 (SF06 GZW, HBD/E/W) were diverted to this company from First Glasgow in June for use on Overground service 5. They were re-registered with local marks SV06 GRF/K/U/X respectively before entering service on 26 June. Open-top Leyland Atlantean 31528 has had its remaining Granite City Circular Tour branding removed, although it still carries adverts for tours.

First Edinburgh FG

BMC B55F-bodied BMC 1100FE 68554 (LK05 FCE) was loaned to this company around April for demonstration to various local authorities. It was not used in service and had gone by May. Alexander H47/37F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50s 30353/5 (G412/1 OGD) arrived from First Manchester in May, similar 31282, 31309 (G295 OGE, G543 RDS) arriving direct from First Glasgow at the same time. Loaned Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 50379 (P817 REX) was returned to First Glasgow by 8 May.

Other vehicles that had left the fleet by May were Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RZs 30207/9 (F287/90 DRJ); Roe-bodied Olympian ONLXB/1Rs 31614/5 (A113 KUM, CUB 42Y); similar Alexander-bodied 31707/9 (ALS 122/4Y); and MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/66s 31029/33 (F591/5 XWY).

New Stirling Council weekday peak hour service C37 (Cambusbarron-Stirling bus station via Torbrex and St Ninians) started on 22 May, replacing recently withdrawn services 47/48.

First Glasgow FG

New Wright Eclipse Urban B43F-bodied Volvo B7RLEs 69083, 69107 (SF06 GYR, GZS) had entered service from Parkhead depot by June. Similar 69110/22-4 (SF06 GZW, HBD/E/W) were delivered to this company but have been diverted to First Aberdeen. Local fleetnumbers for the new B7RLEs include SV771/5/9/80/3-5/7-93, 802-9 (69083/7/91/2/5-7/9-105/14-21).

Wright Eclipse Fusion AB55D-bodied Volvo B7LA 10108 (V608 GGB) returned to this fleet in April from First Somerset & Avon. It has local fleet number AV8 and was operated previously until October 2001.

Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 50379 (P817 REX) was returned by First Edinburgh by 8 May.

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 20007 [CD1] (L110 OSX) was re-registered 692 FFC by June.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RHs 31249/51/4/5 [CO213/5/09, LO3] (C803/5/9/10 KHS) left the fleet by the end of last year. Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 31207 [AH3] (A601 TNS) was sold to Campbell (dealer), Alexandria in February while similar 31282/3, 31309 [AH47, 52, 99] (G295, 300 OGE, G543 RDS) were transferred to First Edinburgh in May. Other Citybuses sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in May were 31264/6 [AH18, 22] (F790/4 LSU), 31267/8/72-4 [AH7, 8, 12-4] (F89, 90/4-6 JYS), 31278 [AH37] (G285 OGE), 31291/4 [AH24, 31] (G409/16 OGD).

Many other vehicles had also left the fleet by May, comprising Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-61 20005[CV1] (692 FFC, *F914 YNV*) which was re-registered before it left; ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 30028 (GFM 103X); similar Northern Counties-bodied 30137 (B140 BNB), 30159 (C209 CBU), 30541, 30167 (C229/32 ENE), 30175 (C243 EVU), 30187 (D256 JVR), 30539/40 (B52 PJA, B92 SJA); similar Alexander RH-bodied 31526 (A110 FSA) and RL-type ONLXB/1RVs 31240-3 [LO119, 4-6] (C112-5 BTS); MCW-bodied MCW

continued overleaf...

Metrobus DR102s 31020/2/7/34/6 (F582/4/9/96/8 XWY); Alexander-bodied Citybus B10M-50 31206 [AH2] (A600 TNS), 31304 [AH94] (G538 RDS); Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10s 31214/6 [A110/4] (A736/41 PSU), 31219/20/4/6 [A123/5/30/3] (B24/6, 31/4 YYS), 31367 [A74] (KGG 134Y); Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dominator DDA1001s 31323-43, 31525 (H251-3/5/7-9/61-70/2-4, 460, 271 KVX), 31346/7 (J181/2 HME); Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-41 48077 (L677 RMD); Plaxton Beaver-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50348/51/2/4-8 (M214/36/42/54-6/60/1 VWU), 50476 (L390 UHU); Alexander TS-bodied Leyland Tiger TRBLXB/2RHs 61312/27 [ST364/0] (B244/60 BYS), 61334 [ST389] (D374 OSU); and Plaxton Verde-bodied Scania N113CRBs 61345/6 [SS1, 2] (H912 HRO, J113 XSX).

Fitzcharles, Grangemouth

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 G42 RGG was sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough in April, and Caetano-bodied DAF SB3000 G169 XJF passed to Dickson, Glenrothes then. Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 PDZ 4204 (*G79 RGG*) was acquired by Bryans, Denny in May.

French, Coldingham

Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-55 SV02 CUU was acquired in May ex-Whyte, Newmachar.

Goosecroft, Denny

Leicester Carriage Builders C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R898 WOC had joined this fleet by May ex-Dennison, Bonhill and LDV M16-bodied LDV Convoy V114 FGD is another recent arrival.

Gordon, Leslie

Sitcar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SN06 AZP was new in April.

Bova Futura 12-340 N18 OVA was re-registered N647 FSR before being sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in March, allowing similar RM02 GSM to become N18 OVA then. Mellor-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D R967 MGB was also sold to Moseley in April.

Harlequin, Dunblane

Operation of the Stirling Council-supported Trossachs Trundler service started on 29 May, providing four anti-clockwise trips on the Callander-Trossachs Pier-Aberfoyle-Callander loop in addition to journeys to/from Stirling bus station at the beginning and end of the day. It runs daily, except Wednesdays, until 1 October.

Harte, Greenock

A second Mercedes-Benz Citaro was due to be delivered around the end of June. Allover white Citaro BU06 CTE was repainted into fleet livery in June. It is beige with orange skirt and roof, Harte fleetnames front and rear, and large Braehead Express lettering on the sides and windows.

Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M351 MRU (*428 EXA, M351 MRU, A14 EXC*) was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in June.

Henderson, Hamilton

New Optare Tempo X1060 YJ06 YSH is numbered 206 and was displayed to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport members in Glasgow on 16 June.

From that day, this company provided short-term replacements for Avondale Coaches on SPT services in the Lanark area. In addition to Lanark Ring'n'Ride service 800, journeys are also provided on services 8/8A, 9 (Lanark-Glespin), 135 (Lanark town service) and 801 (Braehead-Lanark). Tenders are being invited for long-term replacements.

Highland Country RN

Van Hool Alizée C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 676 (VRG 939, *M873 GYS*) was acquired from Cheyne, Daviot by June and entered service in allover silver.

Hired Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 M512 FWV returned to Stagecoach Bluebird in early June and was temporarily replaced then by similar M511 FWV, numbered 30801 in the Bluebird fleet. This vehicle exchange ended around 7 June when M512 FWV returned to Highland.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 414 (H255 DST, *KAZ 2065, 1983 NT, NJS 246, H619 UWR*) was re-registered KKZ 5543 by June; the new registration for withdrawn Leyland National 1151/1R/0401 180 (KKZ 5543, *OAH 552M*) is not known.

Above: As we reported in Scottish Column last month, Catherine Cosgrove's Fishers Tours business in Dundee has launched a series of Scottish Express-branded day return services from Tayside to destinations across Scotland. Their launch follows the introduction of free bus travel throughout Scotland for the over-60s. One of the first coaches to carry Scottish Express branding, Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M B10 SBP (*L11 BUS*), is seen on a rail replacement contract in Edinburgh. KEITH McGILLIVRAY

East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M-55 545 (H925 XYT) has been re-seated from B41F to DP60F and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 644 is C70F ex-C49Ft. Wadham Stringer-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D 041 was repainted into blue and navy bus livery by February.

Horsburgh, Pumpherston

B49F-seated, Volvo-engined Leyland National Greenway 11351A/1Rs TOF 694S, TJN 505R were acquired last December ex-Blackburn Transport 427/8. Both were converted by East Lancs in 1995. Mercedes-Benz Citaro demonstrator BX05 UVZ was noted in use on service 457 (Queensferry-Livingston) during June.

Irvine, Law

Commercial service 200 (Monklands Hospital-Salsburgh) is being cancelled from 25 July.

Irvine, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C57F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 OYY 3 (*G879 ARO*) was acquired in May ex-Turner, Bristol and reverted immediately to its original registration.

Jamieson, Cullivoe

Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit PS05 JAM arrived last year – PS was the original registration mark for Shetland.

Jay, Greengairs

Operation of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport demand-responsive service 600 (East Dunbartonshire Ring'n'Ride) started on 16 July.

JJ Travel, Coatbridge

We understand that this operator intended to replace service 200 (Monklands Hospital-Salsburgh), given up by Irvine, Law from 25 July.

Johnson, Brae

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA P2 RGJ was re-registered J60 JFJ in April.

Keir, Glass

Sitcar Beluga-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SV52 TFF was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in April.

Kingshouse, Balquhidder

Plaxton C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L302 ORS (*FSU 335, L7 TCC*) was acquired in April ex-Simpson, Rosehearty. Mellor-bodied Iveco TurboDaily W733 XKJ and Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MX55 HXR were re-registered K200, 400 KHT respectively by June.

Lothian LB

Scania N94UB OmniCity demonstrator YN06 NZP was inspected in mid-June. D10 (FJ53 LZX), the Hispano Habit-bodied Volvo B7LA demonstrator, which returned here in February, returned to Volvo in April.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 571/88 were converted from H47/24D to H47/28F in April and May.

The remains of fire-damaged Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian 970 (L970 MSC) have been broken up at Seafield after stripping for spares.

McGill, Barrhead

The 'real' McGill's Bus Service makes a welcome reappearance in this column if only to report that the former Barrhead Centenary Bus, AEC Routemaster VYJ 893 (*VLT 89*) reached Parque de la Costa, Tigre, Argentina in 1998 registered CDQ 721, and had passed to Alto Rosario Shopping, Rosario, Argentina by July last year.

McKindless, Wishaw

R102 VLX, a rare B26F-seated Marshall Minibus, was acquired from First Stop Travel, Renfrew in May and entered service in June. It is understood that similar R103/8 VLX were also purchased from First Stop at the same time, but this has still to be confirmed. Alexander ALX200 B35F-bodied Volvo B6LEs P343/8 JND (new to Stagecoach Manchester) were acquired in June ex-Burnley & Pendle 208/13, and were followed by Optare Delta B49F-bodied DAF SB220LCs G741/3/6 RTY, ex-Go North East 4741/3/6.

Service 68 (West Crindledyke-Hamilton) was cancelled from 22 July.

McNairn, Coatbridge

Service 202 (Wishaw-Coltness) is due to be withdrawn from 27 July.

Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB

AEC Routemaster 1 was repainted into red and cream fleet livery in March, and Leyland Olympians 334/6 were given Majestic Tour blue and yellow livery then.

Leyland Olympian 333 is PO47/30F while 334-8 are O51/30F, all having previously been H51/30D. Routemaster 19 is currently H31/24F, ex-H32/24F.

Mackie, Alloa

Former military Wadham Stringer C70F-bodied Dennis Javelin L821 ASU was acquired in May, although its previous identity is not yet known. It has been given full fleet livery.

Marbill, Beith

SJ06 CBX, a new Van Hool Alizée C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12BT, arrived in April in a revised light brown livery with Royal Comfort Class fleetnames. Alizée-bodied B12B SF06 LKC and at least one of the recently delivered Sitcar Beluga-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815Ds are also in this livery.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-48 2154 K (*M821 YSC, XSV 270*) was re-registered M821 YSC when sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in April, and Alizée-bodied Volvo B12M SA02 RZB became 2154 K then.

MCT, Motherwell

Mellor B24FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D X986 AHT was acquired from MHS Hire, Shirehampton in July last year and was re-registered P10 MCT soon after arrival. Marshall-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D P10 MCT (*P520 UGA*) reverted to its original registration in August and passed to Trans Fife Community Transport, Crosshill in November.

Meffan, Kirriemuir ST

The first addition to this fleet since the Stagecoach takeover is Alexander Sprint B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40496 (N496 RVK), previously with Stagecoach Fife and received in Stagecoach livery. Strathtay's Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCLXC/2RH 420 (HSK 766, *C259 FGG*) was on loan during June, while similar TC-bodied TRCLXC/3RH 434 (FSU 309, *E640 BRS, BSK 756, E640 BRS*) was returned temporarily to Strathtay at that time.

Crystals-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D R207 OAO was re-registered KIB 6527 by June.

Milligan, Mauchline

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D P73 HMC was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in April.

M-Line, Alloa

Plaxton Paramount-bodied Volvo B10M-61 D22 EFS (*HIL 5347, D22 EFS*) has been re-registered XSU 977, and Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 E89 VWA (*PNR 723, IJI 336, E89 VWA*) is again registered IJI 336.

Mobus, Leven

Mellor B15FL-bodied Iveco 49E10 M18 (R847 HSC) was acquired last September ex-City of Edinburgh Council 3756, and M26 (SF06 BFE) — an Iveco 50C14 with M15L bodywork by Allied, Glasgow — was new in March. Glen-bodied Renault Master M15 (L641 KSF) and Marshall-bodied Iveco 49-10 M22 (K30 GGY) left the fleet some time ago.

Moffat & Williamson, St Fort

Plaxton Cheetah C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SP06 EBJ and Plaxton Panther C53Ft-bodied Volvo B12B YN06 OPK were new in March and April respectively. The latter is the first example of the two-axle, extended wheelbase 12.8m B12B in the fleet.

Morrison, Stirling

Stirling Council evening service C16 (Throsk-Stirling Royal Infirmary) was withdrawn on 23 June.

Munro, Jedburgh

SF06 ODS, a Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D, was new in April. It is equipped with a wheelchair lift for use on service 131 (Galashiels-Newcastle). Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL J955 SBU left the fleet in June.

Nicholson, Cunningsburgh

Shetland Islands Council Dial-a-Ride services RT3 (Lerwick -Hoswick/Sandwick, Mondays), RT4 (Leebitton/ Sandwick/Hoswick, Fridays) and RT5 (Blett/Cunningsburgh, Tuesdays) were registered from 16 May.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Optare Vecta-bodied MAN 11.190 M10 DVS (*M75 WYG*) was sold to DJ International, Barrhead in June.

Park, Hamilton

Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B12Ms LSK 507/8 were re-registered SJ04 HYB, HXZ respectively in March.

New owners for similar vehicles include Marshall, Leighton Buzzard (SA02 UCB, *LSK 845*); Silverdale, New Stevenston (SG03 ZEX, *HSK 656*); and Silver Fox, Renfrew (SG03 ZBS, ZCC; *HSK 658/7*).

AV7 (P487 MBY) is one of three ex-Metroline Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian partial open-toppers that Scotguide is operating on its City Sightseeing tour of Glasgow. PHIL HALEWOOD

Prentice, Haddington

KVC-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SN54 FNL was re-registered PH54 PCH in August last year.

Prentice, West Calder

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 YSV 618 (*RPP 734, S769 JUG*) was re-registered S616 GKS before passing to Dalybus, Standish in January.

Pride of the Clyde, Greenock

SF06 OKJ is a C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 new in May.

Rennie, Dunfermline

C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D MX06 ONV was new in March. BMC Probus 850 midicoaches MD53 VOC/F were sold to Holt (dealer), Bolton in April.

Royal Mail

Service 193 (Dunoon-Tighnabruaich) was cancelled from 3 June, with 103 (Portree-Dunvegan) due to be withdrawn from 19 August.

Scotbus, Inverness

Weekday service 317B (Fort Augustus-Inverness College) starts on 31 July and runs to 29 December.

Scotguide, Glasgow

MCW Metrobus 224 (WYW 24T) was transferred to First Aberdeen's King Street depot in May for use on the new tour of Aberdeen. The tour is supported by Aberdeen City Council, provided by City Sightseeing with First Aberdeen providing the drivers and garaging/maintaining the vehicle. A third ex-Metroline Alexander PO43/25D-bodied Volvo Olympian YN2RV18Z4 acquired in June from Ensign (dealer), Purfleet was P479 MBY, which was Metroline AV19.

Shiel, Acharacle

Plaxton Cheetah C32FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YN06 PCY entered service at the beginning of June, in the new silver livery.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

Jonckheere Mistral 50 C53F-bodied Volvo B12M SG03 ZEX (*HSK 656*) arrived in April ex-Park, Hamilton.

Silver Fox, Renfrew

Jonckheere Mistral 50 C53F-bodied Volvo B12Ms SG03 ZCC, ZBS (*HSK 657/8*) arrived in May ex-Park, Hamilton.

Simpson, Rosehearty

The new Caetano Enigma C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12B exhibited at the UK Coach Rally in April is registered SM06 SUN and is named *Flower of Scotland.*

Plaxton Premiere 320-bodied Volvo B10M-62s L297 ORS (*PSU 609, L5 TCC*) and L302 ORS (*FSU 335, L7 TCC*) passed to Campbell, Linlithgow and Kingshouse, Balquhidder respectively in April.

Smith, Coupar Angus

C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 SP06 FBF and Sitcar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SP06 FBG were new in April.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 CAZ 1577 (*L633 AYS, LSK 835*) was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in May.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

Recent additions to this fleet comprise Jonckheere Monaco CH53/15Ft-bodied MAN 24.350 50058 (T58 BBW) ex-Stagecoach North East in March and Plaxton Pointer B29D-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 34195 (W195 DNO) ex-Stagecoach London in May. 50058 was previously operated between August 2004 and April 2005.

Dennis Dart SLF 33434 (X434 NSE) has been re-registered TSV 718 and repainted into a blue and gold livery with route branding for the Scone-Hillend service in Perth. Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350 50040 was repainted from allover red into Megabus.com blue last December, and Leyland Titan 10601 has been repainted into allover yellow.

Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7Rs 53224/8/42/4 have been re-seated C49FL, ex-C51FL. Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR 10858 (A858 SUL) was sold around May.

Stagecoach Fife ST

Fourteen new Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R coaches are due for delivery this summer.

New Optare Solos 47301-3 (SP06 FCF/G/J) entered service in June from Aberhill depot. Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 20315/21/2/4/7/9 (M315 PKS, N321/2/4/7/9 VMS), displaced by the recently delivered MAN 18.220 buses at St Andrews depot, were due to be transferred to Strathtay in June. Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40496 (N496 RVK) was transferred to the associated Meffan, Kirriemuir fleet by then.

Financial constraints on Clackmannanshire Council have caused the Wee County Boarder network to be reduced from 10 July. Service F66 (Forestmill/Dollar-Alloa-Alva) was withdrawn, reducing the frequency on the Dollar-Alva corridor to two-hourly and leaving Forestmill with no public transport. Evening service F67 (Dollar-Alloa-Tullibody) has been revised and is no longer shared with Wave, Stirling. Service 74 (Dunfermline-Blairhall) was extended to Falkirk from the same date, replacing service 28.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts 32054, 32120, 32381 — repainted allover white with Scottish Citylink fleetnames in January — were given full Scottish Citylink livery by June, but remained parked in Blochairn depot. Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52263 (M163 CCD) was transferred to Stagecoach Western in April.

Below: Although Royal Mail has withdrawn a considerable number of its rural Post Bus services in Scotland, it has recently replaced the Vauxhall Brava on route 105 (Lairg-Durness) through remote Sutherland on the north-west mainland with this Mitsubishi L200 4x4. Here, DN06 BJZ pauses in the north coast village of Tongue, 75min into its 2hr morning run north from Lairg. At Durness, it makes the one mail collection of the day at 11.25 before taking a different almost 3hr route back to connect with the Thurso-Inverness railway at Lairg. ALAN MILLAR

GROUP CODES

AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort DelGro
FG FirstGroup
LB Lothian Buses
NX National Express Group
RN Rapsons
ST Stagecoach Group

Stagecoach Western ST

Plaxton Interurban C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52263 (M163 CCD) was transferred from Stagecoach Glasgow in April and has been allocated to Cumnock depot.

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 30340 (M740 BSJ) and the remains of Alexander-bodied Scania N113CRB 28929 (H429 EFT) left the fleet last December, and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52635 (S665 SDT) followed in April.

Stepend, Glenmavis

From 1 July, this operator has provided a Saturday-only service 16 (Carnbroe-Kirkwood) to replace the journeys withdrawn on that day by Silverdale Coaches, which continues to operate the route on weekdays.

Strathtay YT

New Alexander Dennis Tridents 18506-9 have ALX400 H47/28F bodywork, and were the only vehicles in the fleet to carry group fleetnumbers when they arrived – although allocated numbers in the Stagecoach system, other vehicles have still to have them applied.

Six Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10M-55s were expected to be transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Fife in June. The first of them, 20324 (N324 VMS), was reported in service from Forfar depot then.

East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 33260 [310] and Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLE 21124 [613] have been repainted into Stagecoach corporate livery.

Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCLXC/2RH 420 (HSK 766, *C259 FGG*) was lent to Meffan, Kirriemuir during June, while similar TC-bodied TRCLXC/3RH 434 (FSU 309, *E640 BRS, BSK 756, E640 BRS*) then returned temporarily to this fleet.

By June, Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobuses 812/4/5 (ORU 738, YJU 694, 143 CLT) reverted to original registrations E412/4/5 GES, allowing Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 451-3 (R451-3 MSL) to become ORU 738, YJU 694, 143 CLT respectively. MCW Metrorider MF154/5 211 (F325 FDT), East Lancs-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R 417 (821 DYE, *XDS 685W, 17 CLT, BSG 546W*) and Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/52 811 (D311 DSR) were sold to RGC Recyclers (dealer), Dundee in May. MCW Metrorider MF154/17 216 (F703 CWJ) and Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/60 813 (VLT 221, *E413 GES*) also left the fleet then.

Stuart, Carluke

Crest C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D T132 SGA was acquired in March ex-Haggis Backpackers, Edinburgh and East Lancs H49/39F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50 G653 EKA arrived in May ex-Arriva Merseyside 3653. The Citybus is not being used at present.

Thomson Group, Glasgow

DP29F-seated Optare MetroRider MR17s M859/62 KCU arrived from Perryman, Burnmouth in May.

Caetano-bodied Dennis Dart SLF T416 LGP has been repainted from allover red into allover yellow.

Walker Group, Barrhead

For convenience, this heading will be used to cover the combined operations of Barrhead Bus Company, First Stop Travel, Gulliver's Travels and Local Bus Company. From 18 June, the former McGill's Bus Service premises in Muriel Street, Barrhead have been used in preference to the Blythswood Drive, Paisley operating centre and the former First Stop Travel depot in Clyde Street, Renfrew.

Vehicles noted during June in allover yellow, including the Erskine Travel buses reported previously, comprised Mercedes-Benz 811D/Reeve Burgess H201 TWE; Mercedes-Benz 811D/Autobus Classique J392 AWB; Iveco 59-12/Marshall K171 CAV; Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) K491 FFS; Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton K236 SFJ; Iveco 59-12/ Mellor K720 UTT, L942 CTT, L946 EOD; Mercedes-Benz 709D/Eurocoach L299 BGA (*94 D 2012*); Volvo B6-50/Alexander L659 HKS, M670-2 SSX; Iveco 59-12/Wadham Stringer M626/36/7/40 HDV, M191/3 HTT; Optare MetroRider MR31 M753 WWR; Iveco 59-12/Alexander (Belfast) N182/3 CMJ; and Mercedes-Benz 614D/Excel T967 JAO.

Mellor-bodied Iveco 59-12 L947 EOD, which never entered service with Gulliver's/Local Bus, has been broken up at the Paisley premises. Scrap vehicles at First Stop Travel's Renfrew depot in June included Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D F134 UMD, similar 609D G76 PKR, Phoenix-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D G212 YDL and Optare MetroRider MR31 M751 WWR.

First Stop Travel's Marshall Minibus R102 VLX was acquired by McKindless, Wishaw in May.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 HSV 725 (*F46 TMU*) had reverted to its original registration by June, allowing recently acquired Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-55 Y288 RSO to become HSV 725.

Wave, Stirling

Owing to financial constraints on Clackmannanshire Council, subsidised evening service F67 (Dollar-Alva-Tullibody) was cancelled from 10 July.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Sunsundegui Sideral-bodied Volvo B12M 7994 WW was re-registered SC02 MXD before being sold to Volvo Bus & Coach (dealer), Loughborough in April; it passed to Stott, Milnsbridge in May.

Whyte, Newmachar

New C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 SF06 OKT arrived in April.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-55 SV02 CUU was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in April and acquired subsequently by French, Coldingham.

Wilson, Gourock

Limited stop service 22 (Greenock, Kilblain Street-Clydebank shopping centre) was extended to Helensburgh on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 19 June.

Wilson, Rhu

Optare Solo M920s Y256/7 KNB left the fleet around April, the former passing to Armstrong, Castle Douglas in May.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Further to last month's issue, SN06 AZB is a C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 new in April.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

N. Cram, S. Farr, First Glasgow, Harte Bus Company, I. Kerr, Lothian Buses, D. McGeachan, R. Newman, B. Nicol, PSV Circle, renfrewshirebus@yahoogroups.com, J. Sinclair, scotlandbus@yahoogroups.com, Stagecoach Bluebird, sescotbus@yahoogroups.com, Stagecoach Glasgow and Stagecoach Western have contributed news items this month. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Fife Scottish Omnibuses Ltd, trading as Stagecoach in Fife.
BASED:	Guthrie House, Glenfield Industrial Estate, Cowdenbeath, Fife.
FOUNDED:	By the mid-1930s, most smaller bus firms in Fife had been absorbed into the Walter Alexander empire, and by the time that vast business was split into three in 1961, the new W. Alexander & Sons (Fife) Ltd was the only significant player in the local bus scene. It became Fife Scottish Omnibuses Ltd in 1985 and Stagecoach acquired this Scottish Bus Group subsidiary in July 1991.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Traditionally throughout the Kingdom of Fife, but since the opening of the Forth and Tay Road Bridges in the 1960s, operations spread into surrounding areas currently including Edinburgh, Edinburgh Airport, Falkirk, Stirling, Perth and Dundee. Also provides longer distance services to Glasgow and undertakes tours, contracts and private hires.
LIVERY:	The Ayres red and cream favoured by Alexander (Fife) and Fife Scottish has given way to Stagecoach corporate livery.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Current fleet strength is around 320 vehicles.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	Alexander (Fife) fleet had a substantial number of Guys, including some unusual Cravens-bodied double-deckers. Other rarities included Strachans-bodied Albion Victor coaches, ECW-bodied Bristol LS6G and RELL6G buses seldom chosen by Scottish operators, Alexander-bodied Albion Vikings and Lowlanders. The significant numbers of Volvo Ailsa double-deckers operated later was also noteworthy. The current fleet is made up largely of standard Stagecoach types (including ex-London Volvo Olympians), but until recently included some Carlyle-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs acquired from Allison, Dunfermline in 2000. Current fleet includes three ex-Southdown Volvo Citybuses with Northern Counties bodies.

Above: Alexander (Fife) FE31 (JXA 931F), new in 1968, was one of the only 12 ECW-bodied Bristol RELL6Gs built for the Scottish Bus Group. FE21-32 arrived 13 years after FE1-20, SBG's only ECW-bodied Bristol LS6G buses. PHOTOBUS

Above: The most recent additions to the Stagecoach Fife fleet are Alexander Dennis ALX300-bodied MAN 18.220s with Taylink branding for route 99 (St Andrews-Dundee), which has recently been increased to a 15min frequency. This is 22407 (SP06 DBZ). STEVE MASKELL

Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue, Belfast, BT6 9RG.

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin,
or by e-mail to: **ntpa@eircom.net.**

MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The first of the 25 new MAN ND363F/Ayats Bravo I double-deck Goldline coaches, 2004-7/10 (AXI 294-7, 290), entered service in June at Larne (2004/5) and Londonderry (2006/7/10). Similar 2002 (AXI 282) has been noted at Coleraine, and all 25 will have registrations transferred from withdrawn Leyland Leopards. The fourth of the new Volvo B12M/Plaxton Panther luxury coaches for the Ulsterbus Tours fleet, 116 (HEZ 9116), arrived at the end of May.

More new arrivals are Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F buses are 825-38/40 (GEZ 7825-28/40), allocated to Magherafelt (825-8), Londonderry (829/30), Coleraine (831-4) and Antrim (835-8/40). The first of the next 29 Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 double-deckers are 2301-7 (IEZ 4301-7) at Londonderry. The double-deckers and Scanias 826-38/40 were lent to Metro while the Special Olympics were held in Northern Ireland on 21-25 June.

Scania K94/Irizar Intercentury demonstrator 2030 (YN55 NJX) has returned to Scania following the return to service of Irizar Century-bodied 111 (SCZ 7111) at Stranraer following repair to electrical fire damage. Also back in service is accident damaged Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1064 (KXI 1064) at Omagh.

Another landmark in the modernisation of the Translink fleets was reached on 30 June, when the last of 681 Leyland Leopards supplied new to Ulsterbus and the Ulster Transport Authority were withdrawn;228 Leopards were destroyed maliciously during the Troubles and the type saw 42 years' service with the fleets. The last example built, Alexander-bodied 339 (BXI 339), has passed to the Irish Transport Trust. Others withdrawn and placed in reserve are 129 (FEZ 8627, *ROI 129*), 223/62 (WOI 2233, YOI 2262) and the oldest in service for some time, 4109 (WAZ 5652, *ROI 109*). Mid Ulster Auctions has sold 186 (OCZ 4209, *VOI 186*) and 209 (WOI 2209) to unknown new owners, while Hamill (dealer), Aoghill has taken 133/41 (VCZ 4093, EEZ 6784; *ROI 133/41*), 171/88/94, 204 (GEZ 4766, EEZ 6839, FEZ 7763, IEZ 1230; *VOI 171/88/94, 204*), 208/19/25/9/51 (WOI 2208 etc), 262/5 (YOI 2262/5), and Beattie (dealer), Hillsborough has taken 314 (GEZ 8114, *AXI 314*), all for scrap. However B62F-seated schoolbus 189 (GEZ 1277, *VOI 189*) has gone to McCall, Lockerbie for further use and Richard Bell, Ballymena has taken 325 (GEZ 5605, *BXI 325*) for non-psv use. Two others sold for preservation are 129 (FEZ 8627, *ROI 129*) and 320 (FEZ 5461, *BXI 320*), with Jeffrey Thompson, Newtownards and Paul Larkin, Londonderry respectively.

Following severe damage in an accident in the Portadown area, Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1149 (LXI 7149) has been withdrawn.

Metro

During the Special Olympics, Ulsterbus Scania L94UBs 826-38/40 (see above) were borrowed and used on Metro services with a small Metro sticker in the windscreen, thus releasing double-deckers to operate alongside borrowed Ulsterbus Volvo B7TLs 2301-7 on the Special Olympics operation. Also borrowed from Ulsterbus were some older B7TLs and Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere Goldliner coaches.

Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 2937 (HCZ 9937) suffered an engine fire on 30 May and will be out of service for some time.

South Liverpool Commercials (dealer) has bought Gardner-engined Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-types 2619/27 (NXI 4619/27), which have been out of service for over a year. It apparently intends to convert them into schoolbuses and may buy others of the same type.

Flexibus

Further fleet reductions involved the delicensing of Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 1, 2 (OCZ 8001/2) and Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander 900/4/15/21 (JAZ 3900 etc); 900 was reinstated temporarily with Ulsterbus at Newtownabbey and has since returned to service with Flexibus.

Sold to new owners in Co. Donegal are Mercedes 711D/Plaxton Beaver 60 (FAZ 3060, *K736 PAB*) to McFadden, Bunbeg, and Volvo B9M/Plaxton Paramount 600 (EEZ 7858, *KXI 600*) to McGonagle, Buncrana. Mid Ulster Auctions has sold Mercedes 709D/Wright 872 (TXI 7872) to an unknown owner.

Above: City Direct 02 G 10280, one of the two MAN-powered Macedonian Coach Industries midibuses acquired from Dunn-Line for Galway city service. DARREN HALL

Dublin Bus

More new Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 H49/27F delivered are AX470/9-83 at Ringsend, AX484-93 at Phibsboro' and AX494-502 at Summerhill, which also expects AX503. AX504-13 are destined for Harristown, with most due after the July works shut down at Falkirk.

Further buses placed in store pending use during the Ryder Cub golf tournament in September are Alexander RH-bodied Leyland Olympians RH168-75 (93 D 10168-75) from Ringsend and Alexander Setanta B43D-bodied DAF SB220LTs AD50/1/3/7-61/3/4 (94 D 33050 etc) from Phibsboro'. Transfer of RV-class Volvo Olympians from Summerhill will replace the remaining 10 ADs at Phibsboro' and, after September, all 20 will be converted to single-door schoolbuses for Bus Éireann. To mark the end of regular use at Ringsend, RH168 (supported by RH32 from the driving school) worked special enthusiasts' round trips on 11 June on routes 65 to/from Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare and 10 (Belfield-Phoenix Park).

The first of three additional open-top Olympians for Phibsboro', RH130, is about to enter service, with RH154/6 expected shortly. In mid-June, Summerhill-based Ghost Bus RH31 entered service, with 1972 Leyland Atlantean DF450 continuing in a support role.

A further sign of Ireland's increasingly mixed immigrant population (Fleet News, June) is that Dublin Bus on-board ticket validators now show 'All prepaid tickets must be validated here' in Polish, Chinese and Russian as well as English. The national census took place on **23** April.

Bus Éireann

The rollout of new SP-class Scania/Irizar PB coaches continues. CIE Tours-liveried SP31-9 are based at Limerick, SP40-8 at Broadstone. They have cascaded similar SP1-18 on to Express duties. New PBs for Express routes are SP49-51/3-8 (06 D 42409/11, 46834, 42408/10, 46832, 42407, 46833, 49371) at Broadstone and SP60-5 (06 D 46835/6, 42406, 49372, 46838/7) at Stranorlar, along with SP59, 66. SP67-70 are destined for Galway.

Four more Scania/Irizar Century coaches reacquired for schools services (and reunited with their original registrations) are SI49, 52 (00 D 41908/12) at Limerick and SI50/9 (00 D 41916/35) at Stranorlar. Similar SI57, 60/1, 72 await allocation. Former Aircoach Volvo B12M/Caetano Enigma schoolbus VC220 (00 D 95917) is confirmed allocated to Broadstone (noted at Ballytore, Co. Kildare on 10 June). Similar VC216/7 are at Longford.

The former GNR garage at Donegal Town (apart from fuelling, valeting and parking, virtually dormant since 1984) has a new role as the north-west regional centre for the fitting of seatbelts to schoolbuses (dealing with Counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon and Mayo). A mainly South African contracted workforce is busily fitting belts — also protective padding to all exposed grab rails including seat tops on bench-type seats — to buses from as far away as Achill Island.

Schoolbuses confirmed withdrawn are GAC Rural Buses KS59, 60/5, 77, 80/5 (EZV 59 etc), KS146-8 (PZV 146-8), KS223 (87 D 2223), while Leyland Lynx LS44 (89 D 52218, *G122 EOG*) has been heavily cannibalised at Longford and may be withdrawn.

Sunday 4 June witnessed the long-signalled revamp of services between Dundalk and Dublin in direct response to competition from Matthews' Dublink coach services. Express route 100X (serving only Drogheda and Dublin Airport *en route*) departs hourly from Dundalk between 05.30 and 20.30, with the first morning journey departing Newry at 05.10 — thus directly challenging train services. Stage carriage services 100/101 are reduced, 100 cut back to Dundalk-Drogheda only, 101 (Drogheda-Dublin) changing from a 15min to 20min frequency. To ensure appropriate capacity, Scania coaches SC1-5 are being transferred from Broadstone to Dundalk in exchange for Volvo B7R/Plaxton commuter coaches VR48/9, 53-5.

From 9 June, all services using the Dublin Bus Aras (bus station) have loaded nose in. To reduce the risk of pedestrian accidents, a two-bay set-down area is to be created outside in Store Street, but temporary parking will continue in Sheriff Street. Limerick is now the last main passenger terminal where buses reverse to load passengers. They continue to reverse into two storage/holding areas at Galway station, but this will likely be changed within comprehensive plans to redevelop all CIÉ-owned property at Galway.

OTHER OPERATORS

City Direct, Galway

Highly unusual additions to this fleet are 02 G 10280/1, Macedonian Coach Industries M709/B34F midibuses supplied new to Dunn-Line and used, unregistered, at Nottingham East Midlands Airport. They have MAN D0836 LOH engines and ZF 4HP500 automatic gearboxes.

Bernard Kavanagh, Urlingford

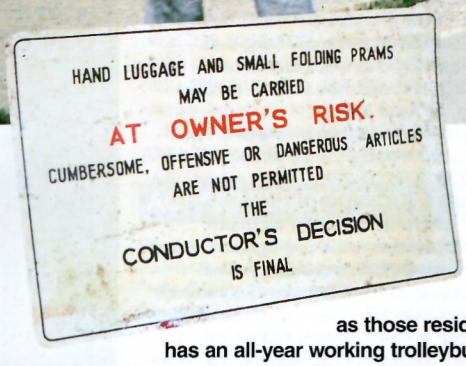
06 D 39776 is a new tri-axle Scania K-series/Irizar PB coach. Eurolines-liveried 06 KK 722 is confirmed as a 12.8m Jonckheere Mistral-bodied Volvo B12B.

J. J. Kavanagh, Urlingford

New Optare Solo bus 06 TN 1111 has been noted operating the Townlink service linking Newbridge and Kilcullen, Co. Kildare.

Slieve Bloom Coaches, Co. Laois

The latest addition, for tours mainly with incoming American tour groups, is 06 LS 2438, a B12B-based Volvo 9700/C49Ft coach similar to those delivered earlier this year to Callinan, Claregalway.



The biennial June trolleybus event at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley — called Trolleysix this year — attracted a selection of visiting vehicles as well as those resident at the museum, which has an all-year working trolleybus overhead. The visitors included Belfast 246 (2206 OI) of 1958, the last new trolley built for the largest UK system outside London. Its Harkness body was built in Belfast, its Sunbeam F4A chassis in the Black Country at Wolverhampton. Belfast painted trolleybuses' rear roof domes green to disguise carbon deposits from the booms. It also furnished the interiors with some forbidding notices — warning that its rules would be 'rigidly enforced' and that the conductor's decision was final if a passenger's luggage was deemed to be a 'cumbersome, offensive or dangerous article'. ALAN MILLAR/DAVID JUKES

Although incomplete interior restoration prevented the East Anglian Transport Museum's Teesside 291 (VRD 186) from carrying passengers at Trolleysix, it was available for photography. Here, this ex-Reading Sunbeam F4A, with Burlingham forward-entrance body, stands ahead of passenger carrying Bradford 735 (DKY 735), a 1946 Karrier W with 1959 East Lancs body. BOB BELCHER

Council saves Glasgow's Famous Five

Glasgow City Council has rescued the five restored buses that First Glasgow offered for sale after it ceased operating the city tour for which four of them were purchased.

The vehicles concerned are 1957 Daimler CVD650-30 D217, which has a Gardner 6LW engine, Leyland PD2/24s L108 and L163, Leyland PD3/2 L446 and Crossley-rebodied 1938 AEC Regent AR292, which was converted into a tow-wagon. The others have Alexander bodies, but open-top L108's was built in the Glasgow Corporation tramcar works.

Although a city council department has obtained the buses, they will be stored and maintained by the Glasgow Vintage Vehicle Trust, which leases its Bridgeton Bus Garage premises from the council.

Left & below: A new event this year, on 25 June, was a bus gathering and running day at Chatsworth House, organised by Transpire and the Chesterfield 123 Preservation Group. Operating one of the free services, to Bakewell, was the 123 Group's Mansfield District MC7 (NNN 7M), a 1974 ECW-bodied Bristol RELH6L semi-coach. Among the buses in the gathering was Rotherham Corporation 220 (KET 220), a 1954 Weymann-bodied Daimler CVG6. IAN MOORCROFT

RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

JULY

15 **Exeter** Coach Station. Vehicle display and heritage bus service.

16 **Alton** Running Day & Bus Rally.
Fleetwood Transport Festival (Tram Sunday).

22/23 **Manchester** Museum of Transport. Festival of Model Tramways.
Plymouth Hoe running day & vehicle rally.

23 **Eastbourne** AEC Regent V running day.
Whitley Bay rally.

30 **Sandtoft** Trolleybus Museum Gathering 2006.
Shoreham Adur & Worthing Bus Gathering, Adur Recreation Ground, A259, by Norfolk Bridge, Shoreham.

AUGUST

5/6 **Cirencester** Steam & Vintage Extravaganza, Kemble Airfield.
Bishops Lydeard. West Somerset Railway steam fayre and vintage vehicle rally.
Middleton/Harrogate. Trans-Pennine Run
Herne Bay Running Day.

13 **Ruddington.** Annual Bus Gala at the Nottingham Transport Centre.
Dudmaston Hall, Shropshire. First Shropshire Bus & Coach Show and Ron Lucas Memorial Road Run.
Ringwood, Hants. Festival of Transport.
Bristol rally and running day, Brislington Park-&-Ride.
Huddersfield Kirklees & Huddersfield Transport Rally, Greenhead Park.
Biggar, Lanarkshire Albion Foundation Rally.

SHOWBUS DATE

This year's EFE Showbus International; is on **Sunday 24 September** and not 26 September, as the organisers advised by mistake for last month's issue.

Most books and videos reviewed are available from the Ian Allan Bookshops: LONDON 45/6 Lower Marsh, Waterloo, London SE1 7RG Tel: 020 7401 2100 • MANCHESTER 5 Piccadilly Station Approach, Manchester M1 2GH Tel: 0161 237 9840 • CARDIFF 31 Royal Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1AE Tel: 02920 390 615 • BIRMINGHAM 47 Stephenson Street, Birmingham B2 4DH Tel: 0121 643 2496 • BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT The Aviation Experience, 3rd Floor, Main Terminal, Birmingham Int'l Airport B26 3QJ Tel: 0121 781 0921 • Contact by email: ianallanbookshop@talk21.com • Or online: www.ianallansuperstore.com • Mail Order enquiries: Midland Counties Publications, 4 Watling Drive, Hinckley, Leics LE10 3EY Tel: 01455 233 747 midlandbooks@compuserve.com

NORTHERN COUNTIES OF WIGAN

BOB ROWE, VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, ISBN 1 905304 02 1 and 978 1 905304 02 8, 300mm x 210mm, 192pp, HARDBACK, £27.50

When you receive a book describing you as a 'luminary', I guess you ought to lavish huge praise on its contents and bask in the glory of such a flattering description. Unfortunately, I found myself becoming disappointed by the contents of this apparently definitive history of one of the nation's great bodybuilders long before I happened upon those kind words on p153.

I hope that the great bulk of information it contains is more accurate and complete than some of the bits that jarred along the way, for Bob Rowe and Venture have probably seized the best chance there is going to be of producing a history of Northern Counties, which came into being in 1919 and, having spent its latter years producing big volumes of products with Plaxton and TransBus badges, was closed by Alexander Dennis in 2005. It's a book that builds on one that the publisher's predecessor, Transport Publishing Company, produced 30 years ago.

It explains the big picture in some detail, not least its formation and long term ownership by the Cardiff-based Lewis family, whose principal interest — in the years before the rise of road transport — was in the hiring of railway wagons. One of its other companies was Hall Lewis, which established a workshop in London that diversified into bus bodybuilding and was reformed in new ownership as Park Royal, and one of the fresh pieces of research this book has uncovered is that Northern Counties predated Hall Lewis and wasn't the offshoot some had assumed it to be.

Another fact explained is that Northern Counties long enjoyed a following in Scotland as well as north-west England, a market it appears to have gained from the 1920s through a tie-up with Albion Motors, which sold complete vehicles with the Wigan coachbuilder's bodywork.

Tables show that it wasn't until the war years that it ever produced as many as 100 bodies in a year and it would take until 1972 — five years after it bought rival Massey Brothers — for it to break the 200 barrier. In 1938, it built only 43 bodies. When it cranked up volumes in 1986 to over 350 bodies, the vast majority of those were van-derived minibuses produced when it looked briefly that this was the new shape of British bus operation. But it was in Henlys and TransBus ownership in 2001-03 that Wigan briefly got into consistently big volume double-deck production, turning out well in excess of 400 bodies each year — all President double-deckers. It's notable, too, that other than in the early-1990s, the slightly unreal mid-1980s and its earlier prewar years, this was a business that produced few single-deck bodies. Double-deckers were its forté.

Thanks to some direct input from former director and general manager David Cherry, the book also provides a useful insight into the close relationship with Greater Manchester Transport, which led ultimately to GMT owning the company, and into the reasons behind its development of the Foden-NC double-decker in the mid-1970s when Leyland was showing every sign of starving bodybuilders like Northern Counties of chassis. One chapter provides a brief history of Massey Brothers, a taster for a book that Eric Ogden and Harry Postlethwaite have been working upon for some time, reminding us not least of Massey's role in developing Leyland's highly advanced low-floor double-deck trolleybus all of 71 years ago.

So why did the book disappoint me? It's for an accumulation of impressions. Apparently sloppy proofreading would have us believe, for instance, that the Lewis family was 'indescribably linked' with coal mining when, presumably, they were linked inextricably. Or that the large number of Scottish orders in the late-1940s shows 'how, once again, the *Hibernian influence* [my italics] plays a crucial part in Northern Counties history'. Surely Hibernian is Irish or has Bob Rowe stumbled upon a connection with an Edinburgh football team with Irish connections? Am I being pedantic? Perhaps, but these sorts of things are plain wrong and sit especially uneasily alongside the book's own little note (on the same page as the Hibernian howler) about the grammatical correctness of Young's of Paisley changing to Youngs' as there was more than one Young in the business.

Another irritation is with things that are half explained. Mentioning the Cardiff Ailsas of 1982, which were the first Northern Counties bodies the city had ordered for 40 years, the book avers: 'The (rumoured) problems concerning the rise-and-fall clause for the trolleybuses must eventually have been resolved.' Had I missed something? It's not unknown, I may confess. A flick back through 90 pages suggests I didn't, but the author did. Commenting that those 10 Cardiff AECs were Northern Counties' only trolleys, all he says is that this 'could have been due to Mr Lewis's unfortunate financial experience with this type of vehicle'.

Where the literary wheels threatened to come off, though, was in the final years, a period I sense that the author feels obliged to cover despite his own passion for the company having ended earlier. While one can sympathise with his problems in gathering material for the earlier years — he mentions a reluctance on the part of older Lewis family members to disclose details of their business and financial affairs — the later years were chronicled by the bus industry press through a virtual goldfish bowl of publicity. And there are plenty of people around who could add their own insight into what happened and why.

Instead, the content suggests sources being some of the press releases, magazine articles and annual bus books of the period. This might explain why it gets quite a few basics wrong — like suggesting the Hughes DAF business was set up in 1994 to sell Northern Counties-bodied DAFs when the name actually changed in the previous decade after it became the UK DAF Bus dealer; saying the Volvo B10B (as opposed to B10BLE) was a low-floor bus; or suggesting former prime minister John Major resigned from Mayflower in 1993 (he was still PM at the time and didn't join the board till some time after the 1997 general election).

Coverage of earlier recent history is also less than complete. Mention of six Willowbrook-badged Atlanteans for Fylde implies that the debate over which bodybuilder was the preferred contractor remains unresolved. The story behind those buses was explained in letters we published in our December 2004 and January 2005 issues, the second of these from former Fylde general manager John Nye. He surely knew the definitive answer, which was that the buses were supplied by W. S. Yeates, the Loughborough dealer. An even more yawning gap is the omission of the common ownership — through Henry Gethin Lewis and a company called Lanaten — of Northern Counties and Lancashire United Transport, one of its principal customers. I began to think I had only imagined there had been such a connection until I read the publisher's excellent LUT book also reviewed on these pages.

I suspect that this book, which is far from cheap, would have benefited from a longer gestation period to allow for more extensive research, interviews, verification of facts, proofreading and explanations beyond the bald facts of when particular directors were appointed or left the board and which buses were built when and for whom. For all that, don't ignore it. It brings together many hitherto unpublished explanations and photographs. You just also need to be aware of its shortcomings.

ALAN MILLAR

LANCASHIRE UNITED, A CENTENARY CELEBRATION

ERIC OGDEN, VENTURE PUBLICATIONS, ISBN 1 905304 12 9, 235mm x 165mm, 144pp, SOFTBACK, £18.95

This, the 10th book in the publisher's Super Prestige series of extensively illustrated histories, is among the best. It is Eric Ogden's third work on LUT, a company that enjoyed a particular following as one of few larger regional bus operators to remain outside the clutches of the large groups until three quarters of the way into the 20th century.

It had already won me over long before I found the Lanaten and Northern Counties connection on p121 (*see Northern Counties review on these*

pages), but that helped confirm my conviction that the author had left few, if any, stones unturned in his quest for information on the whole LUT story — just as it also confirmed that I really had read about Lanaten in *Buses* over 30 years ago and wasn't recalling a worryingly vivid dream. The text additionally reveals a family connection, by marriage, with the Gardners of diesel engine fame, which could possibly also explain LUT's chassis buying policy as well as its later preference for Wigan-built bodies.

If you knew LUT only as an operator of frequently handsome, often a little unusual red buses that inhabited the coalfields and mill towns betwixt Manchester and Liverpool, then this will unravel so much more. Like the fact that it was founded and for a long time owned by members of the landed gentry rather than greasy-fingered busmen, that in its early days as a tramway operator there were connections with London United Tramways, BET and West Riding.

Nor was LUT's independence some chance accident. It resisted several bids from bigger potential buyers. Had one by Crosville been accepted in 1925, LUT would have lost its identity and substantially altered the shape of the bus industry that was regulated six years later. The LMS railway made a fruitless attempt to buy a shareholding in 1931, and in 1948 the state-owned British Transport Commission made overtures, but LUT preferred to wait for one of the then mooted area transport boards to be set up in the region. A change of government three years later put paid to such plans, but LUT's number finally was up after the Selnec (later Greater Manchester) PTE was created in 1969. By 1974, most of its services were in the PTE area and effectively in the PTE's control. Ownership passed to the PTE in 1976 and LUT was wound up five years later.

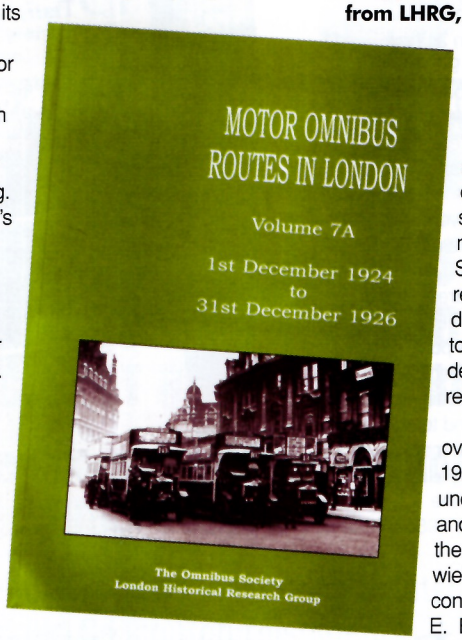
Besides being an excellent history of the company, its vehicles and routes, this book also brings to life the key people who helped make it what it was. Over its last 20 years, LUT succeeded in recruiting big hitters from the wider world of buses as its chief operating officers. When the octogenarian Ned Edwardes retired in 1955 after 44 years in charge, his successor as general manager was Cyril Oakham, latterly Manchester Corporation Transport chief engineer, but with prior experience at London Transport, Newcastle Corporation and in the AEC/Leyland British United Traction joint venture building trolleybuses. One of his lasting legacies was to adopt Manchester's three-piece destination displays at LUT, but the relationship ended after nine years following a boardroom disagreement. His successor, Bob Bailey, had been traffic manager at BET-owned Potteries and had prior experience with Northern General and United Counties.

The pictures — mostly monochrome with a few colour shots towards the end — help capture the essence of LUT and its sister South Lancashire company, as well as the areas that they served. These include a goodly number of bus interiors as well as some of the people who worked in the business. Not least of these is a 1920s view of the Atherton workshops, a reminder of how labour intensive the bus operating industry once was.

ALAN MILLAR

MOTOR OMNIBUS ROUTES IN LONDON, VOL 7A, 1 DECEMBER 1924 TO 31 DECEMBER 1926

THE OMNIBUS SOCIETY LONDON HISTORICAL RESEARCH GROUP, ISBN 13 978 0 901307 65 1 and ISBN 10 978 0 901307 65 3, 295mm x 227mm, 184pp, SOFTBACK, £16.50 (plus £2.50 direct from LHRG, 57 Bluebridge Road, Brookmans Park, Hatfield, AL9 7UW)



In the early 1920s, the London General Omnibus Company was always changing its bus routes. It would start a new one, then quickly alter it if it didn't seem to earn much, or even drop it altogether. Add on summer Sundays-only routes (which might or might not also run on Saturday afternoons) that would then reappear in the following year under a different route number, and you begin to realise how complicated a story the development of London's bus routes really is.

Then add in a new power of control over London's routes from December 1924, given to the Metropolitan Police under the London Traffic Act of 1924, and you discover how even more twisted the story becomes. This control was wielded by the famous (or infamous) chief constable A. E. Bassom who brought in a completely new, if logical system, which however made life yet more confusing for the average passenger. Where existing routes had minor deviations they had carried an 'a' or a 'b' suffix, Bassom dropped all that and every route difference had a completely different number. The suffixes from 'a' onwards for each route were reserved for every different short working, the main number alone usually being reserved for the route's fullest extent. Thus, the famous 11 became the 11e, the pure 11 being reserved for a one-Saturday-a-year extension to Wembley on Cup Final day.

A traveller between Brixton and Streatham before 1 December 1924 could have caught a 34, 43 or 59. Incredibly, on and after that fateful day the choice became 34, 43, 43c, 43d, 58, 58a, 58c, 58f, 59, 59a, 59b, 59c, 59d, 59e, 59f, 59h, 59j, 59m, 133, 134, 143, 143b, 143c, 144, 159, 159a, 159b or 159c.

This invaluable volume covers each and every change, including numerous numbers — often plain ones without suffixes — which the police said could be run, but which nobody was running. A useful feature is the provision of summaries at the beginning and ends and at certain other dates of all the routes authorised and actually running at those particular dates. The book is the culmination of enormous research and throws considerable light on one of the more complicated phases of London's bus routes.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

LONDON TRANSPORT GARAGES

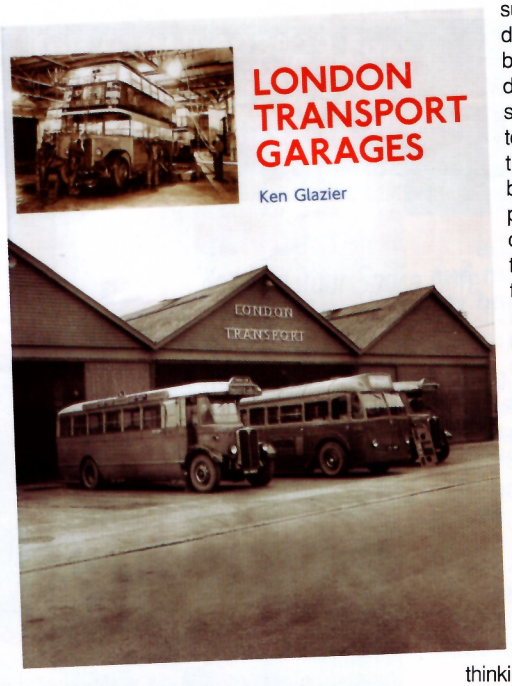
KEN GLAZIER, CAPITAL TRANSPORT, ISBN 185414 299 2, 280mm x 216mm, 192pp, HARDBACK, £25

From its formation in 1933, London Transport had high standards of design for its buildings as well as for its buses. Several Underground stations are famous for their architecture, but the garages have received less recognition and sadly almost all have since been demolished.

This comprehensive and meticulously researched book covers LT garages from the beginning to the end of 1969, an appropriate cut-off date as that was when the country bus and coach operations were hived off. Indeed, the 1970s saw no new garages built, while several postwar ones have also been subsequently knocked down. Indeed, only now does London again have the beginnings of a proper garage-building programme.

This book chronicles the whole story in fascinating detail, aided by a splendid selection of photographs obtained mainly from the LT Museum archive. The detail of some of the interior pictures is incredible, though in some cases the printers do not seem to have done justice to the originals. It comes as a surprise to read how undocumented were many of the activities of the country bus arm in its early days.

It inherited many garages, all listed here, some of which were little more than unsurfaced yards, yet little information survives on closure dates, while no background to decision-making has survived, in contrast to the central area. In the 1930s, LT was busiest initially in providing new country area garages to replace many of the inadequate and motley collection inherited, and only later do central buses begin to get more attention — but they had inherited a good selection of garages from the London General Omnibus Company.



There were some strange differences in thinking between central and country area, too. For example, in conductors' cash counting and paying-in rooms, seats were provided by each cash-counting position in central area garages, but their country area colleagues had to stand. In the postwar years, LT's well-known medical officer also had an input into what facilities should be provided for staff and all new garages had staff canteens.

The difficulties and successes in obtaining garage sites are well covered: even in the 1930s it wasn't easy. There were several unsuccessful attempts in central London, such as Pentonville,

and ironically it is only under the recent privatisation that one has been obtained at Kings Cross. One fascinating appendix gives the calculations in terms of routes to be reallocated and vehicle requirements for each with planned new garages at Alperton, Peckham, Gillingham Street (Victoria), Marylebone and Pentonville. Only Alperton and Gillingham Street were ever built before the war, while Peckham was built in different circumstances after the war as a tram-replacement garage: today only Alperton survives.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

75 YEARS OF TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS

GEOFFREY JONES, ROADS & ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY ASSOCIATION, ISBN 0 9552876 0 X, 235mm x 155mm, 116pp, SOFTBACK, £9.50

The traffic commissioners figure regularly in the pages of *Buses*, but we may not explain enough about who they are or what they do. Geoffrey Jones, a solicitor who specialised in road transport, spent 37 years representing operators across England and Wales and got to know many of the commissioners over that period.

He has blended his own knowledge with the commissioners' annual reports, their observations and some contemporary reports from the early 1930s to provide a better picture of the men — and, in recent years, two women — who have administered the law governing bus, coach and lorry operation in mainland Britain since 1931, of how their workload has changed and the industries themselves have changed. One of the striking things in this account is that although lorries now greatly outnumber buses and coaches, the bus and coach side appears to have taken up the greater part of their time — especially when they had to adjudicate over applications to change and introduce services and regulate fares.

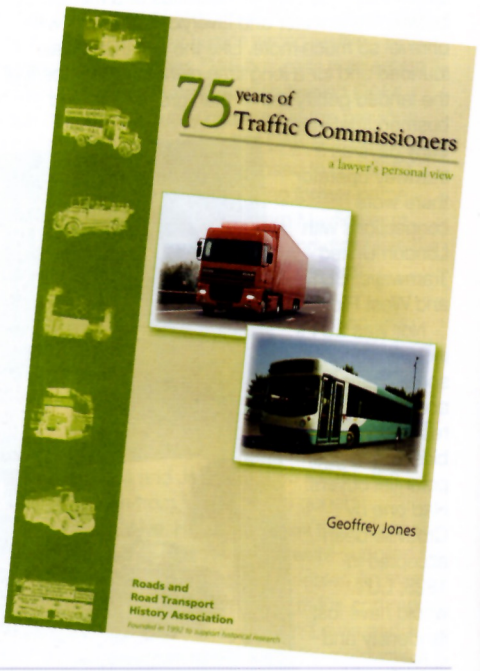
The extracts from the commissioners' annual reports are revealing. In 1935, the commissioners collectively were pressing government to outlaw 'broadcasting by wireless sets' on moving buses and coaches as this might distract drivers' attention, while the following year the Northern commissioner wanted air conditioning to be fitted to improve ventilation to overcome a problem 'rendered more acute by the increasing use of heaters'. By the early 1960s, the Western commissioner thought he might have to issue road service licences to hovercraft operators if they 'intended to hover for hire or reward along or over a road'.

There are snippets of the wider social climates of the times, like pressure to ban smoking on buses, of assaults on conductors and drivers and of deteriorating industrial relations — such as how between November 1969 and March 1970 a dispute 'over the position of indicator board winding handles in the Kirkcaldy depot of W. Alexander & Sons (Fife) Ltd' [on Daimler Fleetlines] escalated into a near total strike across the Scottish Bus Group.

The commissioners have always striven to remain independent from political interference, which helps explain the West Midlands commissioner's exasperation with apparent lack of progress by West Midlands PTA and PTE in 1972 when he said that after three years 'the public may be excused when they ask what has been gained' by their creation. While its employees achieved 'wages and conditions of service second to none in the industry', service frequencies 'in the main have been curtailed and fares have risen three times'.

Their lives changed in the 1980s as the deregulation process unfolded, with the 1981-85 period seeing some particularly contentious cases as established operators tried to resist other operators' attempts to start competitive services. The author represented the National Bus Company and county councils in the traffic courts, trying to resist those competitive assaults. Such arguments vanished with deregulation as head-to-head competition began for supremacy of the streets. 'For the observer it was great fun; for the commissioners often a headache; for the traveling public often disbelief,' he comments.

ALAN MILLAR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1380 Amsterdam. Netherlands. Trams / Light Rail. April 2006. An update on the Amsterdam tram scene taken on a murky day turning to sunshine.

1381 Rotterdam / Den Haag. Tram / light Rail. Netherlands. April 2006. The new tram station in sunny Rotterdam still being finished plus a trip to Den Haag.

1382 Durham. UK. Buses. April 2006. The roundabout near the bus station provides virtually non stop bus action with lots of vehicle types and liveries.

1383 Co Durham / Gateshead. UK. Buses. April / May 2006. Consett Stanley Chester Le Street Gateshead plus Metrocentre Rally , runs 90 minutes.

1384 Hanley Bus Station. Stoke On Trent. UK Buses. May 2006. Al warm spring day which provides a superb opportunity to update the Potteries coverage.

1385 POPS Bus Rally. UK. Buses.May 2006. The superb annual Potteries rally which attracted 107 buses, a record turnout many interesting vehicles.

1386 Berlin. Germany. Trams / Light Rail. May 2006. Berlin trams around Alexanderplatz and Keopenick plus Potsdam, Woltersdorf and Schoneiche.

1387 Berlin. Germany. Buses, Trams, Trolleybuses. May 2006. Buses mainly at Zoo but some others plus Potsdam, trams at Strausberg, Eberswalde Trolleys.

1388 North Wales. UK. Buses. March / May 2006. Two visits with winter weather at Wrexham then an early summer at Caernarfon and Bangor.

1389 Worcester & Hereford. UK. Buses. May 2006. A very busy and interesting visit to Worcester and Hereford never fails with interesting independents.

1390 York. UK. Buses. May 2006. A visit to look at the innovative First 'Streetcars' , a good sunny day with plenty of other buses as well recommended.

1391 Helsinki, Finland. Trams Buses. May 2006. A bright spring day to explore both the city centre and out to several of the tram termini in the suburbs.

1392 Tallinn, Estonia. Trams, Trolleybuses, Buses. May 2006. A great selection including new Solaris trolleys, low centre section trams, trailer buses.

1393 Lithuania. Trolleybuses. June 2006. First we visit Kaunus where amazingly 2 Skoda 9Trs are still running , second part Vilnius , lots of new Solaris.

1394 Minsk, Belarus. Trams , Trolleybuses, Buses. June 2006. The last European dictatorship, lovely in the sunshine though, loads to see RVZ, local stuff etc.

1395 Latvia. Trams. Trolleys, Buses. June 2006. An amazing variety with a start at Leipaja single route trams, then Daugavpils, trolley poles, RVZ, also Riga.

1396 CVRTC Rally Gaydon. June 2006. UK. Trucks / Lorries / Commercials. Part one of our extensive survey of this amazing celebration of commercials.

1397 CVRTC.Rally Gaydon.June 2006. UK. Trucks/Lorries/Commercials. Second part of coverage include lorries leaving in the wonderful sunshine.

1398 Black Country Living Museum. Trolleybus Weekend. UK. Trolleybuses. Up to eight trolleybuses in amazingly hot weather, the longest UK trolley route.

1399 Burnley and Blackburn, Lancashire, UK, Buses. June 2006. Two weekday afternoon visits with buses earning their living in glorious summer weather.

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689 Bristol, UK. Buses. 1998/99. Most fleet numbers announced to aid identification, in winter sunshine between Dec 1998 and Jan 1999.

872 Staffordshire. UK. Buses. Feb 2001. Hanley , then on to Burton for Stevensons in Arriva livery, a stopover in Rugeley finishing in Stafford

937 Bristol. UK. Bus. November 2001. two visits starting with December 2000 and then November 2001 also Western Super Mare

980 Staffordshire. UK. Buses. April / May 2002. Hanley on a wet Saturday morning plus Stafford, then Leek, to end Burton on Trent.

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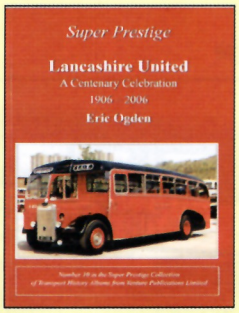

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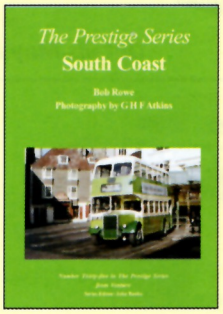

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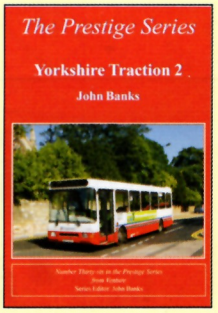

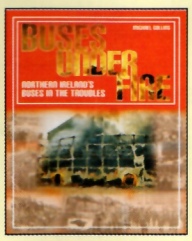

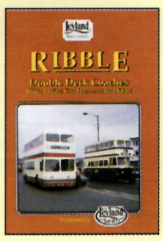

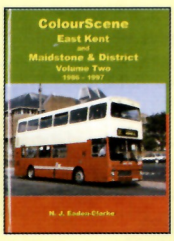

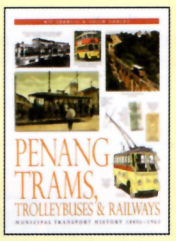

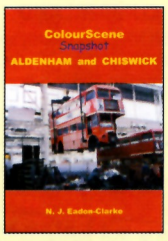

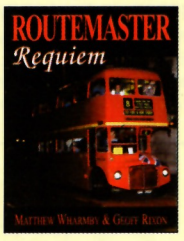

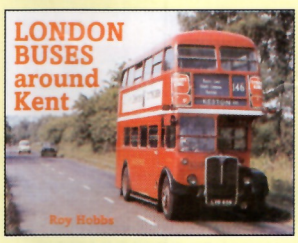

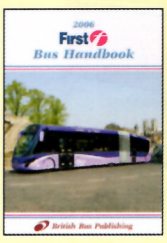

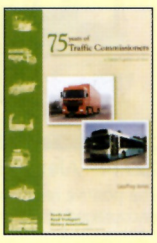

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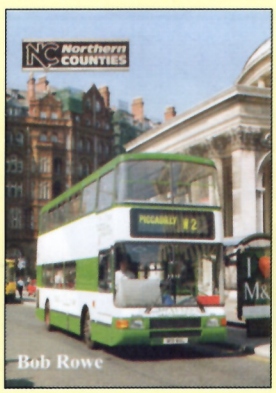

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